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No. 981

WINTER
1949/1950

MAGAZINE

EDITED BY PETER QUENNEL

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JOHN MURRAY, 50 ALBEMARLE STREET, LONDON, W.1

EDITORIAL NOTE

This Christmas we bid good-bye, temporarily at least, to a distinguished fellow voyager. *Horizon* announces that for the next twelve months it will go into retirement, at the end of that period either reappearing refreshed and rehabilitated or, if the editorial board should so decide, definitely dropping out. We trust that the second course may not be adopted; *Horizon* is a paper we should be sorry to lose, and during its lively ten years' run has continued to perform an extremely useful service. Besides the hospitality it has extended to well-established authors, it has opened its pages to numerous types of experimental writing; and many a young man and young woman, hearing that for the first time he or she had 'got into *Horizon*,' must have experienced a renewal of faith and energy which, despite present-day discouragements, drove them back to literary work. Magazines that favour experimentalism sometimes lose their sense of form. *Horizon* has succeeded in keeping its shape, thanks largely to the direction of a highly gifted editor whose little finger on the helm, though frequently disposed with an air of pensive negligence, has often carried more weight than the average editor's whole person. Inquisitive, alert, fastidious—yet prepared now and then to abandon his fastidiousness if he felt that the claims of obscure merit might otherwise be passed over—Mr. Cyril Connolly has made his paper a whole, and has given to every issue, or almost every issue, the unmistakable stamp of his mercurial temperament. We deplore the suggestion that he may relinquish the tiller and hope that, after a period of creative repose, certainly earned by a decade of arduous editing, he can once again be persuaded to lay a masterly hand upon it.

[The Editor asks that all contributions should be addressed to him at 50 Albemarle Street, London, W.1, and accompanied by a stamped envelope.

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Augustus

BY W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

I THINK I must be one of the few persons still alive who knew Augustus Hare. I had published a first novel which had had some success and he asked a common friend, a minor canon of St. Paul's, to invite me to dinner so that we might meet. I was young, twenty-four, and shy; but he took a fancy to me, because, tongue-tied as I was, I was content to listen while he discoursed, and shortly afterwards he wrote to me from Holmhurst, his house in the country, and asked me to come down for the week-end. I became a frequent guest.

Since the kind of life he lived there is lived no longer, I think it may be not without interest to describe the daily round. Sharp at eight in the morning a maid in a rustling print dress and a cap with streamers came into your room with a cup of tea and two slices of thin bread and butter, which she placed on the night table; if it was winter a twenny followed her, in a print dress too, but not so shiny and rustling, who raked out the ashes of the fire which had been lit the night before, and laid and lit another. At half-past eight the maid came in again with a small can of hot water. She emptied the basin in which you had made a pretence of washing before going to bed, put the can in the basin and covered it with a towel. While she was thus occupied the twenny brought in a sitz-bath, laid a white mat so that water should not splash the carpet, and on it, in front of the blazing fire, placed the sitz-bath. On each side of this she set a large can of hot water and a large can of cold, the soap-dish from the washing-stand and a bath-towel. The maids retired. The sitz-bath must be unknown to the present generation. It was a round tub perhaps three feet in diameter, about eighteen inches deep, with a back that rose to your shoulder blades when you were sitting in it. Outside it was japanned a bilious yellow and inside painted white. As there was no room for your legs, they dangled outside, and you had to be something of a contortionist to wash your feet. You could do nothing about your back but trickle water down it from your sponge. The advantage of the contraption

AUGUSTUS

was that as your legs and back were out of the water you had no occasion to dawdle as you do in a bath in which you can lie full length, so that though you lost the happy thoughts and fruitful reflections which you might otherwise have had, you were ready to go downstairs at nine o'clock when the breakfast bell rang.

Augustus was already seated at the head of the table, laid for the hearty meal he was soon to partake of. In front of him was the great family Bible and a large Prayer Book bound in black leather. He looked solemn and even imposing. He had a long body and short legs, so that when he was on his feet he lost something of his impressiveness and indeed looked a trifle ridiculous. The guests took their seats and the servants trooped in. A row of chairs had been placed for them in front of the sideboard on which, besides a noble ham and a brace of cold pheasants, various good things to eat were kept hot in silver entrée dishes by the thin blue flames of methylated spirit. Augustus read a prayer. He had a strident, somewhat metallic voice and he read in a tone that seemed to suggest that he was not one to stand any nonsense from the deity. Sometimes it happened that a guest was a minute or two late; he opened the door very cautiously and slunk in on tiptoe, with the air of one who seeks to make himself invisible. Augustus did not look up; he paused in the middle of a sentence and remained silent till the late-comer had seated himself, and then proceeded from where he had left off. The air was heavy with reproof. But that was all: Augustus made no reference afterwards to the sluggard's tardiness. When he had read a certain number of prayers Augustus closed the book and opened the Bible. He read the passages marked for the day, and having finished, uttered the words: 'Let us pray.' This was the signal for us all to kneel, the guests on hassocks and the servants on the Turkey carpet, and we recited in chorus the Lord's Prayer. Then we scrambled to our feet, the cook and the maids scuttled out of the room; in a moment the parlour-maid brought in tea and coffee, removed Bible and Prayer Book, and put the tea-kettle and coffee-pot in their place.

I was accustomed to family prayers and I noticed that some of the prayers Augustus read sounded strangely in my ears. Then I discovered that he had neatly inked out many lines in the Prayer Book he read from. I asked him why.

'I've crossed out all the passages in glorification of God,' he said. 'God is certainly a gentleman, and no gentleman cares to

be praised to his face. It is tactless, impertinent and vulgar. I think all that fulsome adulation must be highly offensive to him.'

At the time this notion seemed odd to me and even comic, but since then I have come to think that there was some sense in it.

After breakfast Augustus retired to his study to write the autobiography on which he was then engaged. He neither smoked himself, nor allowed smoking in the house, so that such of his guests as hankered for the first pipe of the day had to go into the garden, which was pleasant enough in summer when you could sit down with a book, but not so pleasant in winter when you had to seek shelter in the stables.

Luncheon, a substantial meal of eggs or macaroni, joint, if there were no left-overs from the night before, with vegetables and a sweet, was at one; and after a decent interval Augustus, in a dark town suit, black boots, a stiff collar and a bowler hat, took his guests for a walk in the grounds. The property was small, rather less than forty acres, but by planning and planting he had given it something of the air of a park in a great country house. As you walked along he pointed out the improvements he had made, the resemblance he had achieved here to the garden of a Tuscan villa, the spacious view he had contrived there, and the wooded walks he had designed. I could not but observe that notwithstanding his objection to treating God with fulsome adulation, he accepted the compliments of his guests with a good deal of complacency. The promenade ended with a visit to the Hospice. This was a cottage he had arranged for the entertainment of gentlewomen in reduced circumstances. He invited them for a month at a time, supplied them with their travelling expenses, farm and garden produce and groceries. He enquired if they were comfortable and had everything they wanted. No duchess, bringing calves-foot jelly and half a pound of tea to a cottager on the estate, could have combined condescension with beneficence with a more delicate sense of the difference that exists between the conferring of favours and the accepting of them.

After that it was time to go back to tea. This was a copious repast of scones, muffins or crumpets, bread and butter, jam, plain cake and currant cake. The better part of an hour was spent over this, and Augustus talked of his early life, his travels and his many friends. At six he went to his study to write letters and we met again when the second bell called us down to dinner. We were

waited on by maids in black uniforms, white caps and aprons, and were given soup, fish, poultry or game, sweet and savoury ; sherry with the soup and fish, claret with the game, and port with the nuts and fruit. After dinner we returned to the drawing-room. Sometimes Augustus read aloud to us, sometimes we played an intolerably tedious game called Halma, or, if he thought the company worthy, he told us his famous stories. The clock struck ten and Augustus rose from his chair by the fire. We marched out into the hall, where candles in silver candle-sticks were waiting for us, lit them and walked upstairs to our respective bedrooms. There was a can of hot water in the basin and a fire blazed in the hearth. It was difficult to read by the light of a single candle, but it was enchanting to lie in a four-poster and watch the glow of the fire till the sleep of youth descended upon you.

Such was a day in one of the smaller country houses at the end of the nineteenth century, and such, more or less, throughout the land was the day in hundreds upon hundreds of houses belonging to persons who, without being rich, were well enough off to live in the great comfort which they looked upon as the way in which gentlefolk should live. Augustus was house-proud, and nothing pleased him more than to show guests the relics of a 'wealthy past,' with which Holmhurst was filled. It was a rambling house of no architectural merit, with wide corridors and low ceilings, but by adding another room or two, building archways in the garden, decorating it here and there with urns and statues, among which was one of Queen Anne and her four satellites which had once stood in front of St. Paul's, Augustus had managed to give the place an air. It might have been the dower-house on the estate of a great nobleman, which if there was no dowager to inhabit it, might be appropriately lent to an aunt who was the relict of a former ambassador to the Ottoman court.

Augustus was profoundly conscious of the fact that he was the representative of an ancient county family, the Hares of Hurst-monceaux, connected, though distantly, with members of the aristocracy ; and though its fortunes were fallen, his sense of the consequence this gave him remained unabated. He was like an exiled king, surrounded with such objects of departed grandeur as he has saved from the wreck, who is hail-fellow-well-met with the rag-tag and bobtail his altered circumstances force him to frequent, but who is alert to watch for the bobs and bows that his graciousness might induce ill-conditioned persons to omit.

Though Augustus was apt to mention with a deprecating smile that he was descended from a younger son of King Edward I, the family fortunes were founded by Francis Hare, a clever parson who had the good luck to be Sir Robert Walpole's tutor at King's College, Cambridge. Walpole's advancement, as we know, was furthered by Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, and it may be surmised that it was by her influence that Francis Hare was appointed Chaplain General to the forces in the Low Countries. He rode by the side of the great general at the battles of Blenheim and Ramilies. With such powerful friends it is not surprising that his merits did not go unrewarded. He was made Dean of Worcester and then of St. Paul's; and the second of these lucrative offices he continued to hold when he was created first Bishop of St. Asaph's and then Bishop of Chichester. He made two very profitable marriages. By his first wife, Bethaia Naylor, he had a son, Francis, who inherited the vast and romantic castle of Hurstmonceaux and a handsome estate, and then added the name of Naylor to that of Hare. By his second wife, a great heiress, he had a son Robert, whose godfather, Sir Robert Walpole, as a christening present bestowed on him the sinecure office of sweepership of Gravesend worth £400 a year. This he held to the day of his death. Sir Robert took sufficient interest in his old tutor's son to advise that he should adopt the Church as his profession, since he could thus best provide for his future. Robert took orders and was given first a living and then a canonry at Winchester. The bishop was a prudent man and while Robert was still very young arranged a marriage for him with the heiress of a property close to that of his own wife. By her he had two sons, Francis and Robert, and soon after her death he married another heiress. His elder brother died childless and the Canon of Winchester inherited Hurstmonceaux Castle. The bishop must have been well satisfied with his son's station in life.

The bishop's descendants seem to have inherited little of his worldly wisdom, for from that time the fortunes of the family began to decline. The first step was taken by the Canon's second wife. She dismantled the castle and from it took the floors, doors and chimney-pieces for a large new house called Hurstmonceaux Place which she built in another part of the park. The Canon's eldest son, Francis Hare-Naylor, the grandfather of our Augustus, was a good-looking ne'er-do-well, bold, witty and extravagant; he seems to have got himself periodically arrested for debt and in

order to extricate himself from his difficulties was obliged to raise money on his prospects from the Hurstmonceaux estates. He had taken the fancy of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, who introduced him to her cousin Georgiana, daughter of Jonathan Shipley, Bishop of St. Asaph. The pair eloped, whereupon their respective families 'renounced them with fury' and neither the Bishop of St. Asaph nor the Canon of Winchester ever saw them again. They went abroad and lived on the two hundred pounds a year which the Duchess allowed them. They had four sons, Francis, Augustus, Julius and Marcus. When Francis Hare-Naylor, the husband of Georgiana Shipley, eventually succeeded his father he sold the remnants of his ancestral estates for sixty thousand pounds. On his death, in 1815, his eldest son Francis Hare, for since he no longer owned Hurstmonceaux he abandoned the additional name of Naylor, came into possession of what remained of the family fortunes, and proceeded to live a life of pleasure till his circumstances obliged him, like many another spendthrift at that time, to take up his residence on the Continent. But he was apparently still well enough off to give large dinner parties twice a week. He kept good company and counted Count D'Orsay and Lady Blessington, Lord Desart, Lord Bristol, Lord Dudley among his more intimate friends. In 1828 he married Anne, a daughter of Sir John Paul, the banker, and by her had a daughter and three sons. The youngest of these, born in 1834, was the Augustus who is the subject of this essay.

Though the Hurstmonceaux estates had been sold the family had retained the advowson of the rich living. The incumbent was the Reverend Robert Hare, the younger son of Francis Hare-Naylor, and it was understood that he should be succeeded by the Reverend Augustus Hare, one of Francis Hare's three brothers. Of Marcus, the youngest of the three, I have been able to discover nothing except that he married a daughter of Lord Stanley of Alderley, had a 'place' at Torquay, complained when he was staying at Hurstmonceaux Rectory that the water with which the tea was made was never on the boil, and died in 1845. Julius was a Fellow of Trinity and a very learned man. With his brother Augustus he was the author of a book called *Guesses at Truth*, which in its day was popular with the devout. When the Reverend Robert Hare died his nephew the Reverend Augustus Hare did not wish to leave the parish of Alton Barnes, to which he had been appointed, and persuaded his brother Julius to accept the living

of Hurstmonceaux in his place. It was a wrench to Julius to leave Cambridge, but he had too great a sense of duty to allow a rich living to go out of the family and so consented to the sacrifice. He eventually became Archdeacon of Lewes.

The Reverend Augustus Hare married Maria, daughter of the Reverend Oswald Leicester, Rector of Stoke-upon-Terne. He died in Rome, whither he had gone for his health, in 1834, the year in which our Augustus was born. It was after him that my hero was named and the widow, Mrs. Augustus Hare, was his god-mother. Francis and Anne Hare, the child's parents, found it none too easy to live in the style suitable to their position and at the same time support a family, and they were very much annoyed when their last son was born. Maria Hare was childless and on her return to England after burying her husband, it occurred to her that they might be willing to let her adopt her godson. She wrote to her sister-in-law and shortly afterwards received from her the following letter.

'My dear Maria, how very kind of you. Yes, certainly the baby shall be sent as soon as it is weaned; if anyone else would like one, would you kindly remember that we have others.'

The child in due course was 'sent over to England with a little green carpet-bag containing two little white night-shirts and a red coral necklace.'

Maria Hare's father, the Reverend Oswald Leicester, belonged to a family of great antiquity, which claimed direct descent from Gunnora, Duchess of Normandy, grandmother of William the Conqueror. He belonged thus to the same class as the Bertrams of Mansfield Park and Mr. Darcy of Pemberley. The Reverend Oswald Leicester was a sincere Christian, but he had a very proper notion of what befitted an English gentleman. He would have agreed with Lady Catherine de Bourgh that Elizabeth Bennet was not the sort of person Mr. Darcy should marry. Reginald Heber, the hymn-writer, afterwards Bishop of Calcutta, was Rector of Hodnet, which was only two miles from Maria Leicester's home, and she spent long periods with him and his wife. Reginald Heber had a curate called Martin Stow and since we are told nothing about his antecedents we must conclude that he was not 'a gentleman born.' Maria Leicester and Martin Stow fell in love with one another, but her father would not hear of his daughter's union with 'a mere country curate,' and she was too dutiful a daughter to marry without his consent. When Reginald

Heber was appointed to the bishopric of Calcutta he offered his Indian chaplaincy to Martin Stow, who accepted it in the hope that this preferment would induce the Reverend Oswald Leicester to look upon his suit with favour. His hope was frustrated, Maria and Martin met and parted, and a few months later the sad news was brought her that Mr. Stow had died of fever. Now, the Reverend Augustus Hare was a cousin of Mrs. Heber's and a friend of Martin Stow. He was the confidant of the lovers. His was a willing ear when they needed to pour out their troubles. On hearing of Martin Stow's death Maria Leicester wrote to Augustus Hare as follows :

'I must write a few lines, although I feel it almost needless to do so, for Augustus Hare knows all my feelings too well to doubt what they must be now . . . it is to you I turn as the sharer, the fellow sufferer in my grief . . . I know that if you can you will come here. When we have once met it will be a comfort to mourn together.'

They met, they corresponded, and, as Maria wrote in her Journal, 'unconsciously and imperceptibly the feelings of esteem and friendship,' with which she had regarded Augustus, 'assumed a new character, and something of the tenderness and beauty attending a warmer interest' took their place. Two years after the death of Martin Stow Augustus asked her to marry him and she agreed. 'Secure in the affection of Augustus,' she wrote again in her Journal, 'I feel no longer a blank in life, and everything takes a new and bright colouring.' But it was not till a year later that she received her father's consent to the engagement. It may be surmised that he gave it because he thought it would be for the happiness of his daughter, thirty-one years old by this time, an age then at which a maiden, as Mr. Wordsworth somewhat ungalantly put it, was withering on the stalk, but also because he thought an alliance between the Hares of Hurstmonceaux, descended from a younger son of King Edward I and the Leicesters of Toft, descended from Gunnora, Duchess of Normandy, could not but be regarded as suitable. Moreover, with the rich living of Hurstmonceaux to fall to Augustus on the death of his Uncle Robert, Maria would be able to live in the style appropriate to a gentleman's daughter. Though both families were sincerely imbued with the conviction that this life was merely a post-inn, as it were, in which they sojourned for a brief space on their way to their heavenly home, they saw no reason why they should not make their temporary abode as comfortable as possible.

After the death of her husband Maria Hare spent some months with Julius, her brother-in-law, at Hurstmonceaux and then took a house nearby, called Lime, which remained her home for twenty-five years. When she adopted the little Augustus, her godson, it was with the idea that he should be brought up to take Holy Orders and in due course succeed his uncle Julius as Rector of Hurstmonceaux. She began to train him in virtue from the beginning. When he was only eighteen months old she wrote in her Journal: 'Augustus has grown much more obedient, and is ready to give his food and playthings to others.' His religious education was her constant care and when he was three, by which time he could read and was learning German, she took pains to explain to him the mystery of the Trinity. When he was four his playthings were taken away from him and banished to the loft, so that he should learn that there were more serious things in life than toys. He had no companions of his own age. There was a poor woman who lived close to the gate of Lime whom Maria Hare often visited to relieve her necessities and by her pious exhortations persuade her to accept her lot as a special blessing of Providence. This woman had a little boy, whom Augustus longed to play with, and once did in a hayfield, but he was so severely punished for it that he never did again. To Mrs. Hare (Miss Leicester of Toft as *was*) it was not only a duty, it was a labour of love to visit the poor, but it was out of the question to allow a gentleman's son to play with a working-man's.

On March 13, 1839, she wrote in her Journal: 'My little Augustus is now five years old. Strong personal identity, reference of everything to himself, greediness of pleasure and possession, are I fear prominent features in his disposition. May I be taught how best to correct his sinful propensities with judgment, and to draw him out of self to live for others.'

Notwithstanding everything, however, Augustus was sometimes naughty. Then he was sent upstairs 'to prepare,' which I take it means to take down his knicker-bockers and bare his little bottom, and Uncle Julius was bidden to come from his rectory to beat him. This he did with a riding-whip. Mrs. Hare was afraid of over-indulging the child and he only had to express a wish to have it refused. On one occasion she took him to visit the curate's wife and someone gave him a lollypop which he ate, but when they got home the smell of peppermint betrayed him and he was

given a large dose of rhubarb and soda with a forcing spoon to teach him in future to avoid carnal indulgence.

Meanwhile Maria Hare had made the acquaintance of the Misses Maurice, Priscilla and Esther, sisters of Frederick Maurice, the evangelist. They kept a school at Reading, but every year came to stay at Lime for a period. They were intensely, even aggressively, religious and they acquired a great influence over Mrs. Hare. One of its results was that she adopted more stringent measures so to form the character of Augustus that he might become a worthy minister of Christ. Till then he had had roast mutton and rice pudding every day for dinner, but now he was told that a delicious pudding was to be served. It was talked of till his mouth watered. It was placed on the table and he was just about to eat the helping he had been given when it was snatched away from him and he was told to get up and take it to some poor person in the village. Mrs. Hare wrote in her Journal: 'Augustus would, I believe, always do a thing if *reasoned* with about it, but the necessity of obedience without reasoning is especially necessary in such a disposition as his. The will is the thing that needs being brought in subjection.' And again: 'Now it seems to be an excellent discipline whereby daily some self-denial and command may be acquired in overcoming the repugnance to doing from duty that which has in itself no attraction.'

Mrs. Hare in this sentence did not express herself with her usual clarity. I think she must have meant that if Augustus, aged then five, was forced to do every day something he didn't want to do, he would eventually want to do it.

Once a year Maria took Augustus to stay with her parents at Stoke. They went in their own chariot, spending the night at post-inns, and even after the railway was built they continued to go in their chariot placed on a truck. When at last they came to use ordinary railway carriages they still had post-horses to meet them at a station near London, because Mrs. Hare would not have it known that she did anything so excessively improper as to enter London in a railway carriage.

Mrs. Leicester, Maria's step-mother, was severe but kind to Augustus. If he made a noise at home he was at once punished, but at Stoke Mrs. Leicester would say: 'Never mind the child, Maria, it is only innocent play.' She knew her duty as a clergyman's wife. She taught in the village school and when she thought it necessary to chastise her pupils, would take a book from the

table and on using it say to the offender : ' You don't suppose I'm going to hurt my fingers in boxing your ears,' and then : ' Now we mustn't let the other ear be jealous,' upon which she soundly smacked it. The curates came to luncheon at the Rectory on Sundays, but they were not expected to talk, and if they ventured on a remark were snubbed. After they had eaten their cold veal they were called upon to give Mrs. Leicester an account of what they had been doing during the week and if they had not done what she wished they were harshly chidden. They were obliged to come in by the back door, except Mr. Egerton who was allowed to come in by the front door because he was a gentleman born. When Augustus told me this story, I, being young, was shocked.

' Don't be so silly,' he said when I expressed my indignation, ' it was perfectly natural. Mr. Egerton was a nephew of Lord Bridgewater. The others were nobodies. It would have been very impertinent of them to ring the front door bell.'

' D'you mean to say that if they happened to come to the Rectory together, one would have gone to the front door and the other to the back ?'

' Of course.'

' I don't think it speaks very well for Mr. Egerton.'

' I dare say you don't,' Augustus answered tartly. ' A gentleman knows his place and he takes it without giving it a second thought.'

Mrs. Leicester ruled the maids as strictly as she ruled the curates. When annoyed with them she had no hesitation in boxing their ears, which, such were the manners of the time, they never thought of resenting. The washing was done every three weeks and it was a rule of the house that it must begin at one in the morning. The ladies-maids, who were expected to do the fine muslins, had to be at the wash-tubs at three. If one was late the housekeeper reported it to Mrs. Leicester who gave her a good scolding. But Mrs. Leicester had a lighter side. Maria Hare thought it sinful to read fiction and in the evenings read Miss Strickland's *Queens of England* to her parents. *Pickwick* was coming out then in monthly numbers and Mrs. Leicester took them in. She read them in her dressing-room, behind closed doors, with her maid on the watch against intruders, and when she had finished a number she tore it up into little pieces which she threw in the waste-paper basket.

When Augustus was nine Mrs. Hare, on the insistence of the

Misses Maurice, was sent to a preparatory school, and in the summer holidays, after the usual visit to Stoke, she took him for a tour of the English lakes. Uncle Julius accompanied them, and Maria, wishing to give Esther Maurice a rest after her arduous work at Reading, invited her to join the party. It was a dangerous kindness. Julius Hare proposed to Esther Maurice and was accepted. Maria Hare shed bitter tears when they told her of their engagement. Esther shed bitter tears and Julius 'sobbed and cried for days.' Ever since her husband's death Julius had been Maria's constant companion. He came to dinner at Lime every evening at six, leaving at eight, and Maria constantly drove up to the Rectory in the afternoon. Julius 'consulted her on every subject, and he thought every day a blank when they had no meeting.' Doubtless, since the prayer-book and the laws of England forbade her to feel any warmer emotion for him, her affection remained strictly that of a sister-in-law for her brother-in-law, but she would have been more than human if she had welcomed the notion of another woman, a protégée of her own, becoming the mistress of Hurstmonceaux Rectory. But however distasteful such a prospect was, she had a more serious objection to the marriage. Mr. Maurice was a scholar and a clergyman, but he was not a gentleman born, and the manners of the Misses Maurice, high-minded and worthy as they were, were not the sort of manners she was accustomed to. They were not ladies. Martin Stow perhaps was not a gentleman born, but her dear dead Augustus had been the first to admit his excellence and nobility of character. She loved him, but she had accepted her father's decision that he was not the sort of person it was proper for her to marry.

The marriage took place. Mrs. Julius Hare, now Aunt Esther to Augustus, was a deeply religious woman, but of a harsh and domineering character. 'She looked upon pleasure as a sin and if she felt that the affection for somebody drew her from the thorny path of self-sacrifice she tore that affection from her heart.' To such of the poor as accepted her absolute authority she was kind, generous and considerate; and to 'her husband to whom her severe creed taught her to show the same inflexible obedience she exacted from others, she was utterly devoted.' For his soul's good she set herself to subdue the little Augustus. Since she was determined that her marriage should make no difference in the habits of the two families, and Julius had dined every night at Lime she insisted that Maria Hare and Augustus should dine every night

at the Rectory. In winter it was often impossible for them to get home after dinner and they passed the night at the Rectory. Augustus was a delicate boy and suffered badly from chilblains so that there were often large open sores on his hands and feet. Aunt Esther put him to bed in an unfurnished damp room with a deal trestle to sleep on, a straw palliasse and a single blanket. The servants were not allowed to bring him hot water and in the morning he had to break the ice in the pitcher with a brass candlestick or, if that had been taken away, with his wounded hands. Still for the good of his soul because the smell of sauerkraut made him sick he was made to eat it. Sunday was a day of respite. Owing to her religious duties Maria Hare did not go to the Rectory, but Aunt Esther, fearing that Maria would indulge him, persuaded her to let Augustus be locked up in the vestry between services with a sandwich for his dinner. He had a cat to which he was devoted, and when Aunt Esther discovered this she insisted that it should be given up to her. Augustus wept, but Maria Hare said he must be taught to give up his own way and pleasures to others. With tears he took it up to the Rectory and Aunt Esther had it hanged.

It is almost inconceivable that a pious, God-fearing woman could have treated a child of twelve with such inhumanity. I have wondered whether her behaviour to him, besides her determination to train him in the way of virtue and self-sacrifice, was not occasioned also by a desire, of which she may well have been unconscious, to give the adopted mother who adored him a needful lesson. Maria Hare had been very good to Esther Maurice, but had there not been something in her manner which never let the humble friend forget that Mrs. Hare was her benefactress and that there was a great gulf fixed between a young woman, of the highest principles certainly, but of humble origins, and Maria Leicester of Toft, the widow of a Hare of Hurstmonceaux? Is it not possible that Esther Maurice, like Charlotte Brontë in her situation as a governess, saw slights when only kindness was intended, and in a dozen little ways felt that the subservience of her position was never entirely absent from Maria's mind? When she became Mrs. Julius Hare did it never cross her mind that it could only do dear Maria good to suffer? And she did suffer. But she accepted her distress at the miseries inflicted on the boy as a fiery trial that must be patiently endured.

I shall pass over the next few years of Augustus's life. On

leaving his preparatory school, he went to Harrow, but owing to illness only stayed there for a year and until he was old enough to go to Oxford lived with tutors. He took his degree in 1857 and then started on the main business of his life. This was to paint in water-colour, see sights and mix in high society. He made his first sketch from nature when he was seven. Maria Hare drew well, and as she could not but look upon this accomplishment as harmless, she fostered Augustus's inclinations and gave him useful lessons. She would look at a drawing carefully and then say: 'And what does this line mean?' 'Oh, I thought it looked well.' 'Then, if you don't know exactly what it means, take it out at once.' This was sound advice. As Maria Hare deprecated colour, he was allowed to use only pencil and sepia, and it was not till he was grown up that she permitted him to paint in water colour. He made endless sketches. The walls of Holmhurst were papered with the best of them in handsome frames and he had albums full of them. At this distance of time I cannot judge of their quality. Years later Maria Hare showed some of them to Ruskin who examined them very carefully and at last pointed out one as the least bad of a very poor collection. Augustus had an eye for the picturesque and as I look back I have a suspicion that the critic was unduly severe. They were painted in the style of the mid-nineteenth century, and if they are still in existence might be found now to have a certain period charm.

When Augustus was only fourteen, at a tutor's at Lyncombe, he was already an indefatigable sight-seer. To visit an ancient house or a fine church he would often walk twenty-five miles a day. So that he should not be led astray Mrs. Hare sent him back to his tutor's with only five shillings in his pocket and he went on these excursions without a penny to buy himself a piece of bread. Many a time he sank down by the wayside, faint with hunger, and was glad to accept food from the 'common working people' he met on the road. But neither his delight in painting the picturesque nor his passion for sights was as important to him as to get into society. In this endeavour he started with certain advantages. Through his parents he was connected with a number of noble and county families, and through his adopted mother with several more. However distant the relationship he counted all their members as his cousins.

Maria Hare had been in poor health for some years and the

doctors advised her to try living in a climate milder than that of Hurstmonceaux. She had before this taken Augustus for short trips on the Continent, but shortly after he left Oxford, it was decided that they should make a prolonged sojourn abroad. So that they should be properly waited on they took Mrs. Hare's maid and manservant with them. Julius Hare, to the sorrow of his relations and the relief of his parishioners, had died two years before and Maria, while she was away, lent Lime to his widow. They travelled slowly, of course by carriage, through Switzerland and Italy, visiting places of interest and making abundant sketches; they had a goodly supply of books in their roomy chariot and during the journey read the 'whole of Arnold, Gibbon, Ranke and Milman.' It looks like a formidable undertaking. On reaching Rome they took an apartment in the Piazza del Popolo. Augustus's father had died some years before and his widow, whom Augustus called Italima, a contraction of Italian mamma, was living in Rome with her daughter Esmeralda. Of her two other sons, Francis and Robert, Augustus's elder brothers, one was in the Guards and the other in the Blues. Since he knew them but slightly and did not care for them I need only say that they lived as extravagantly as their father had done, with even smaller resources, and died destitute. Francis had further outraged his family by marrying 'a person with whom he had long been acquainted,' which, I presume, was Augustus's delicate way of saying that she was his mistress. In his autobiography he dismissed her in a footnote: 'The person whom Francis Hare had married during the last months of his life vanished, immediately after his death, into the chaos from which she had come.'

Augustus had seen little of his real mother and she had never taken any interest in him. But now he became better acquainted with her. She moved with her daughter in the best Roman society, and when Maria Hare could spare him she took Augustus with her. The list of princes and princesses, dukes and duchesses, he thus frequented is impressive. Italima liked to see Augustus more often than his adopted mother quite approved of, and sometimes when he had a particular engagement with her, Maria Hare would demand his presence. It looks as though the saintly woman was not entirely devoid of the unpleasant failing of jealousy.

Maria Hare and Augustus remained abroad for eighteen months and would have remained longer but that Mrs. Hare began to

suspect that her adopted son had leanings to Roman Catholicism, and though he was ill and the doctors told her he could not survive the rigour of an English winter she insisted on taking him back to a staunchly Protestant country. She felt that the hazard to his soul was of more consequence than the hazard to his body. She was well aware how much pleasure he took in the religious processions that so often passed through the streets of Rome, the sight of cardinals in their red robes driving in their coaches, the splendid ceremonies of the Church and the pomp of the Eternal City when the Pope was still a temporal sovereign. She knew Augustus well and she dreaded his levity. One day she told him that she had never known anyone who enjoyed things as much as he did ; she said it not by way of blaming him, but perhaps with the feeling at the back of her mind that there was danger in such an attitude towards life.

During this period there was a wave of conversions to Catholicism. There had been the notorious instances of Newman and Manning ; their example had been followed by others of lesser note, though by some of greater social importance, and it had caused dissension in many families. Italima and Esmeralda had become Catholics, though to Italima's credit it had to be admitted that she had sought to dissuade her daughter from taking the step, because she had expectations from her grandmother Lady Anne Simpson and the old lady would certainly disinherit her if she changed her religion. Sir John Paul, Augustus's uncle, had turned his daughter out of the house and refused ever to see her again when she did the same thing, and Mary Stanley, Maria's niece and the daughter of the Bishop of Norwich, was disowned by all her relations when she too forsook the faith of her Protestant fathers.

The reader will remember that from his earliest years Augustus had been destined to the Church. It was on this account that Maria Hare had brought him up so strictly. It was on this account that he had been taught to sacrifice himself for others. It was on this account that his toys were taken away from him. It was on this account that Aunt Esther, when she came on the scene, had insisted that he should be enured to hardship and privation, and that he should learn that pleasure, a snare of the devil, was something he must eschew. Though the Hares had lost their land and most of their money, there still remained the rich living of Hurstmonceaux, and as the youngest son of Francis Hare it was his right in due course to have it. Unfortunately Augustus's

eldest brother had been driven by his financial necessities to sell the advowson, so that Maria Hare could never hope to see her adopted son occupy the Rectory with which she had so many pleasant and edifying associations, but that did not make it less desirable that Augustus should adopt the profession for which he had been so well prepared. His ancestry and his family connections marked him out to pursue the useful and profitable life of a clergyman who was a gentleman born. The founder of the family fortunes had held two bishoprics besides the Deanery of St. Paul's, one of Augustus's grandfathers had been Bishop of St. Asaph, another Canon of Winchester, his two uncles had taken Holy Orders; Maria's brother-in-law, Edward Stanley, had been Bishop of Norwich, and his son Arthur Stanley was already Canon of Canterbury and would in due course no doubt occupy a position of even greater dignity. He did in fact become Dean of Westminster, marry Lady Augusta Bruce and grow to be a close friend of Queen Victoria. Then there were the Strathmores, the Ravensworths, the Stanleys of Alderley. With such connections Augustus could surely look forward to preferment. The good old days of pluralism were past, but there was no reason why with his ability and so many influential relations he should not achieve distinction in the Church.

It was a shock to Maria Hare when Augustus, while they were still in Italy, informed her, we can imagine how nervously, that he did not wish to be ordained. From every point of view, from the earthly as well as from the heavenly, this seemed as foolish as it was ungrateful. She shed bitter tears. But she was a sincerely Christian woman and what could she do when he told her that he felt himself unfitted for ordination? She loved him devotedly, and though it almost broke her heart, at last acquiesced in his determination. But when they got back to England and the family were informed there was hell to pay. They asked him his reasons for refusing to be ordained. He could give none that was adequate. He merely said that it was uncongenial. Aunt Esther thought that made it all the more desirable that Maria should insist on it. Had he religious doubts? No. He had come back from Italy as staunch a Protestant as when he left. It was obvious then that if he persisted in his obstinacy it could only be that he wanted to lead an idle, useless life of self-indulgence.

The truth was simply that Augustus was bored with religion.

He had been bored by the two services he had been forced to attend every Sunday, and bored by the long, incomprehensible sermons of his Uncle Julius, bored by the elevating conversations on the power of faith which Maria Hare held with her friends and relations, exasperated by the evangelical fanaticism of the Maurice women and made miserable by the severities to which for his soul's good he had been so long subjected. When I knew him Augustus had long ceased going to church on Sundays, and if he continued to have family prayers it was as a social gesture becoming to a gentleman of ancient lineage.

Then came the question as to what he should do. He tried to get a clerkship at the Library of the British Museum, but did not succeed, and finally through the good offices of Arthur Stanley he was commissioned by John Murray to write the *Handbook of Berks, Bucks and Oxfordshire*. It was a job that just suited him, for it enabled him to do a great deal of sight-seeing and at the same time bring him in contact with the sort of people he liked to know. He did in fact make a number of desirable acquaintances, discovered a number of new cousins and stayed at a number of grand houses. At about this time Lime was sold over Maria's head and she moved to Holmhurst, which then became Augustus's home for the rest of his life. The handbook was so well received that Murray asked him to choose any counties he liked for another work of the same kind. He chose Northumberland and Durham. So began the long series of guide-books which made the name of Augustus Hare well-known to at least two generations of travellers in Europe. They were written on a plan that had novelty, for interspersed with useful information were long quotations from the New Testament, Fathers of the Church, historians, art critics and poets. The earnest sight-seer must have been flattered to find in his guide-book quotations from Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Martial, Suetonius, and even from a work which few can have read, *Prudentius contra Symmachum*. Augustus paid his readers the compliment of leaving these passages untranslated and the compliment was doubtless appreciated.

But his habit of extensively quoting from other authors sometimes got him into trouble. In his *Cities of Northern and Central Italy* he quoted largely from some articles by Freeman, the historian, without receiving permission, whereupon Freeman charged him with bare-faced and wholesale robbery. Augustus was very much hurt. He felt that the real interest of Freeman's articles

had been overlooked owing to the 'dogmatic and verbose style in which they were written,' and he had introduced extracts from them in order to attract notice to them and so do the historian a good turn. 'I need hardly say,' he adds in a footnote to his account of the incident, 'that as soon as possible thereafter I eliminated all reference to Mr. Freeman, and all quotations from his works from my books.' He was satisfied that he had thus swept the historian back into the obscurity from which he had withdrawn him. What Augustus describes as a most virulent and abusive article appeared upon this work in the *Athenaeum* in which he was accused of having copied from Murray's *Handbooks* without acknowledgement and as proof quoting passages in which the same curious mistake occurred. And in fact that is exactly what he had done. But the books were very popular. By the end of the nineteenth century there had been fifteen editions of *Walks in Rome*, five of *Florence and Venice*, and six of *Walks in London and Wanderings in Spain*. Spain, Holland and Scandinavia, all of which he wrote books about, he knew very superficially, but he knew Italy and France as few people did then or are likely to do now.

During the next ten years Maria and Augustus Hare spent a great deal of time in France and Italy. She was often ill and when she was Augustus nursed her devotedly. In the intervals he moved in high circles, took parties of well-born ladies to paint in water-colour with him, and in Rome conducted them on sight-seeing tours during which, the centre of a little crowd of admiring females, he discoursed on the artistic merit and the historical associations of the objects he showed them.

Italima had been greatly reduced in circumstances by the failure of her father's bank and lost what she had left by the defalcation of the attorney who attended to her affairs. She died in 1864. Her daughter Esmeralda died four years later and Maria Hare in 1870. For a while after this event Augustus was in acute financial anxiety, for the relation between his adopted mother and himself had been so close that she could not bring herself to believe that he could long survive her. She failed in consequence to make what he calls the usual arrangements for his future provision, and it looked as though he would be left with nothing but Holmhurst and sixty pounds a year. He does not explain how things were arranged, but the upshot seems to have been that he succeeded to her fortune. He complained bitterly that, since he was no legal relation, he had to pay ten per cent in duty on everything

he inherited. He was always reticent about his income and I have no notion what it was ; it was sufficient to enable him to keep up Holmhurst in some style, entertain constantly, and travel whenever he had a mind to. He had at least enough to lose a few hundred pounds now and then on a wild-cat speculation. He did not look upon himself as a professional author, but as a gentleman who from purely altruistic motives wrote books which would help travellers profitably to enjoy the beauties of nature and art. He published them at his own expense and they must have brought him in considerable sums.

From the time of Maria Hare's death Augustus's life followed a course of some regularity. He went abroad a good deal, generally for his work on the guide-books ; and when in England he spent some time at Holmhurst, receiving a succession of guests, and made a round of country house visits. When in London he had a bedroom in Jermyn Street and went to the Athenæum for breakfast, where he always occupied the same table ; he spent the morning at work in the library and went out to lunch ; in the afternoon there were calls to pay, a tea-party or a reception at which he had to make *acte de présence*, and at night he dined out. There is a note in his journal which strikes a sinister note : ' May 15. Drawing-party in dirty, picturesque St. Bartholomew's. For the first time this year no one asked me to dinner, and I was most profoundly bored.' Augustus never married. There is a cryptic remark in his autobiography which suggests that on one occasion he had an inclination to do so. ' This year (1864) I greatly wished something that was not compatible with the entire devotion of my time and life to my mother. Therefore I smothered the wish, and the hope that had grown up with it.' If this means what I think it does I should say it was safe to surmise that the object of his affections was a well-connected young woman of some fortune ; but of course he was financially dependent on Maria Hare, and though there is no reason to believe that his reasons for smothering the wish were not such as he said, he cannot but have been aware that if he married without her consent she was capable of cutting him off without a shilling. It was a tradition in the family. I do not think he was of a passionate nature. He told me once that he had never had sexual intercourse till he was thirty-five. He marked the occasions on which this happened, about once every three months, with a black cross in his Journal. But this is a matter on which most men are apt to boast, and

I dare say that to impress me he exaggerated his licentiousness.

During the last months of Mrs. Hare's life Augustus had frequently discussed with her his desire to write a book about her which should be called *Memorials of a Quiet Life*. She laughed at the notion when first he put it before her, but after reflecting for a day or two said that she could not oppose his wish if he thought that the simple experiences of her life, and God's guidance in her case, might be made useful to others; she gave him many journals and letters which he might use, and directed the arrangement of others. He set to work at once and was able to read to her the earlier chapters before she died. He spent the winter after her death in seclusion until he had finished the book. His cousins, especially the Stanleys, were very angry when they found out what he was up to, and even threatened to bring an action against him if he published any of the letters of Mrs. Stanley, Maria's sister. Arthur Stanley, by this time Dean of Westminster, went so far as to persuade John Murray to go to Augustus's publishers to try to stop the publication.

The book was issued and three days after its appearance a second edition was called for. It was in fact a great success both in England and in the United States, and pilgrims came from America to visit the various places Augustus had written about. Carlyle, whom he met at luncheon, told him: 'I do not often cry and am not much given to weeping, but your book is most profoundly touching, and when the dear Augustus (Maria's husband) was making the hay I felt a lesson deep down in my heart.'

The world that read these two stout volumes with emotion has long ceased to exist. To me they have seemed tedious. There is, of course, a great deal about the Hares and the Leicesters; the members of these families wrote immensely long letters to one another, and one can only marvel at the patience they must have had to read them. The pious consolations, the pious exhortations which these people wrote to one another on the death of a relation or a friend were so unctuous that one can hardly believe in their sincerity. But one must not judge of the sentiments of one generation by those of another. God was constantly in their thoughts and their conversation turned frequently on the life to come, but Augustus somewhat maliciously noticed that though in youth they talked of longing, pining for 'the coming of the Kingdom,' as

they grew older they seemed less eager for it. 'By and by would do.'

The success of *Memorials of a Quiet Life* brought Augustus other work of the same kind, and in course of time he published *Life and Letters of Frances, Baroness Bunsen*, *The Story of Two Noble Lives*, *The Gurneys of Earlham*, and others. The subjects of *The Story of Two Noble Lives* were Louisa, Lady Waterford and Charlotte, Lady Canning. It is still readable; indeed the chapters that deal with the period during which their father, Lord Stuart de Rothesay, was ambassador in Paris, from 1815 to 1830, are very interesting. Augustus had made the acquaintance of Lady Waterford when he was getting together his material for Murray's *Handbook on Durham and Northumberland*; and after this he paid her a yearly visit first at Ford and then at Highcliffe. This was not an isolated case. He was apparently a welcome guest at a vast number of great houses, and there seem to have been few to which he could not count on an invitation year after year. He went from castle to castle, from park to park and from hall to hall. He was not what people call a man's man. He could play no games. He had never touched a card in his life. He neither shot, fished nor hunted. Though he had a few male friends of his own age, men he had known at Oxford, and a few others whose religious proclivities he could sympathise with, the men with whom he got on best were older. They liked the enthusiastic interest he took in their noble mansions and their contents. Sometimes, however, his enthusiasm was put to a more severe test than he appreciated. When he went to stay at Port Eliot his host met him at the station and almost walked him off his feet while he showed him every picture in the house, every plant in the garden and every walk in the woods. 'There is a limit to what ought to be shown,' Augustus wrote acidly in his diary, 'and Lord Eliot has never found it out.'

It was with the ladies that Augustus found himself most at ease. They liked to go sketching with him, they were flattered by his eagerness to see the local sights and took him daily for drives to visit a neighbouring great house, a fine church or a romantic ruin. In those days, days long before the gramophone and the radio, when the gentlemen came home after their day's sport, after tea the ladies retired to rest till it was time to dress for dinner and Augustus went to his room to write his Journal. The interval between dinner and bedtime was devoted to conversation and

music. Augustus showed the party his sketches and those who sketched showed him theirs. Anyone who played the piano was invited to play and anyone who had a voice was pressed to sing. It was then that Augustus came into his own. He was a famous teller of stories. He had discovered his gift when he was a boy at Harrow and early in life had begun assiduously to collect them. He wrote them all down in his Journal. A great many were ghost stories, for there were few of the houses he visited that did not harbour a ghost who appeared either to frighten a guest who had been put in the haunted room or to announce the death of a member of the family. There appears to be a lack of initiative in the conduct of ghosts and there is a certain tediousness in their behaviour; Augustus, however, told his stories very well and when people asked him whether he believed in them he answered that he had no doubt at all of their existence. A little shudder of apprehension would pass through his listeners. But ghost-stories by no means exhausted his repertoire. He could tell stories of telepathy, of clairvoyance and of precognition. He could tell blood-curdling tales about the Italian and Spanish aristocracy. It was a 'turn' that he did, and he took pains to perfect himself. In fact it was the greatest of his social assets. He relates that when he was staying at Raby, if ever he escaped to his room after tea a servant would tap on the door and say: 'Their Graces want you to come down again.' 'Always,' he adds, 'from their insatiable love of stories.' His renown grew to such a height that on one occasion a party was arranged at Holland House so that he might tell Princess Louise some of his stories, 'which she had graciously wished to hear.'

The houses he visited were mostly those of high-minded people and the conversation often turned on religious subjects. On these Augustus, who had heard them discussed at home from his earliest youth, was quite at home. Sometimes, however, he thought they went too far. When for instance he was staying with the George Liddells he found Sunday a severe day. It was spent in going to church, reading prayers and listening to long sermons at home; and even on week-days, after morning prayers, the Psalms and Lessons for the day, verse by verse, were read before anyone was allowed to go out.

Augustus did not consort much with men of letters and I think his interest in them was only in so far as they gave occasion for an anecdote which he could tell at the luncheon or the

dinner table. On one of her journeys Maria Hare took him to see Wordsworth who read to him, 'admirably,' some of his verses. Augustus said that the poet talked a good deal about himself and his own poems, 'and I have a sense of his being not vain, but conceited.' The distinction is delicate and I think Augustus must have meant that Wordsworth had an overweening opinion of himself without caring much what other people thought of him. We are all more tolerant of vanity than of conceit, for the vain man is sensitive to our opinion of him and thereby flatters our self-esteem; the conceited man is not and thereby wounds it.

Mrs. Greville took Augustus to see Tennyson: 'Tennyson is older looking than I expected so that his *unkempt* appearance signifies less. He has an abrupt, bearish manner, and seems thoroughly hard and *unpoetical*: one would think of him as a man in whom the direct prose of life was absolutely ingrained.' Tennyson insisted that Augustus should tell him some stories, but he 'was atrociously bad audience and constantly interrupted with questions.' 'On the whole,' Augustus adds, 'the wayward poet leaves a favourable impression. He could scarcely be less egotistic with all the flattery he has . . .' 'Mr. Browning,' whom he met at Lady Castletoun's, failed to make an impression on him, though he quotes, I suspect with approval, Lockhart's remark: 'I like Robert so much because he is not a damned literary person.' Carlyle had been to stay at Hurstmonceaux Rectory, where 'they had not liked him very much,' when Augustus was a child and during the period with which I am now concerned he met him from time to time in London. Once Lady Ashburton took him to see the sage of Chelsea in Cheyney Row. 'He complained much of his health, fretting and fidgiting about himself, and said that he could form no worse wish for the devil than that he might be able to give him his stomach to digest with through all eternity.' On another occasion, at Lady Ashburton's, Carlyle 'talked in volumes, with fathomless depths of adjectives, into which it was quite impossible to follow him, and in which he himself often got out of his depth.' Augustus met Oscar Wilde at Madame du Quaine's. 'He talked in a way intended to be very startling, but she startled him by saying quietly, "You poor dear foolish boy, how can you talk such nonsense?"' Mrs. M. L. had recently met this "type of an aesthetic age" at a country house, and described his going out shooting in a black velvet dress

with salmon-coloured stockings, and falling down when the gun went off, and yet captivating all the ladies by his pleasant talk. One day he came down looking very pale. "I am afraid you are ill, Mr. Wilde," said one of the party. "No, not ill, only tired," he answered. "The fact is, I picked a primrose in the wood yesterday, and it was so ill, I have been sitting up with it all night."

So much for Augustus's association with men of letters. When he was still quite a young man he had been impressed by the Speaker of the House of Commons, Denison, with whom he was a fellow-guest at Winton Castle, because he had 'a wonderful fund of agreeable small talk.' Augustus realised how useful an accomplishment this was. I don't know whether he deliberately sought to acquire it, but from my own recollection I can vouch for his having done so. If he could dine out every night he was in London it was because he gave his hosts good value for their money. He could listen as well as talk. I think one can get some idea of the sort of conversation which was then in favour by an incident Augustus relates. Rogers, the banker-poet, was a great talker and there was a brash young man by the name of Monkton Milnes, whom people called The Cool of the Evening, and who was a great talker too. 'If Milnes began to talk, Rogers would look at him sourly, and say, "Oh, you want to hold forth, do you?" and then, turning to the rest of the party, "I am looking for my hat, Mr. Milnes is going to entertain the company."' But by the time Augustus came to know the brash young man he had become Lord Houghton, and 'in spite of his excessive vanity' he grew sincerely attached to him. He could not but deplore that Lord Houghton sometimes entertained 'a quaint collection of anybodies and nobodies'; on one occasion indeed he asked Augustus to a party where he met 'scarcely anyone but authors, and a very odd collection—Black, Yates, and James the novelists; Sir Francis Doyle and Swinburne the poets; Mrs. Singleton, the exotic poetess (Violet Fane), brilliant with diamonds; Mallock, who had suddenly become a lion from having written a clever squib called "The New Republic," and Mrs. Julia Ward Howe with her daughter.' This was not the sort of company Augustus was used to keep.

Lord Houghton could tell as many stories as he could and had a fund of small talk as agreeable. Augustus was wise enough not to compete with him. But it was different when he came in con-

tact with persons of no social consequence who sought to make themselves heard at the dinner tables of the great. Abraham Hayward whom he often to his disapproval met in society, he dismisses in two footnotes : ' Constantly invited by a world which feared him, he was always determined to be listened to, and generally said something worth hearing ' ; but nothing that Augustus thought fit to record. In another footnote Augustus says that Hayward, ' who had been articled in early life to an obscure country attorney always seemed to consider it the *summum bonum* of life to dwell among the aristocracy as a man of letters ; and in this he succeeded admirably, and was always witty and well-informed, usually satirical, and often very coarse. '

Augustus's social career was crowned by an event that came about through his writing of the memoirs of the Baroness Bunsen. When this work was approaching completion he went to Germany to see her two unmarried daughters and on the way paid a long visit to the Dowager Princess of Wied who had been a close friend of hers. Here he met her sister, the Queen of Sweden, who told him that she must consider him a friend, since in a life of trouble his *Memorials of a Quiet Life* had been a great comfort to her and that she never went anywhere without them. She was sending the Prince Royal to Rome that winter ' to learn his world ' and expressed a wish that Augustus should go there too. She invited him to visit her in Sweden and shortly afterwards he did so. He made a good impression on the King and it was agreed that Augustus should act as guide and mentor to the Prince during his sojourn in the Eternal City. The Queen begged him to sow some little seeds of good in her son's young heart and the King talked to him of the places and people he should see. Augustus accordingly went to Rome for the winter. He saw the Prince twice a day and showed him the necessary sights. He took care that he should make acquaintance with the right people. He read English with him and delivered lectures at places of interest not only attended by the Prince and Baron Holtermann, Marshall of the Palace, but by a choice selection of distinguished persons. At the end of the winter Augustus was able to write : ' On looking back, I have unmingled satisfaction that I came. He leaves Rome quite a different person from the Prince I found here—much strengthened, and I am sure much improved in character as well as speaking English and French (which he did not know before),

and being able to take a lively animated part in a society in which he was previously a cypher.'

In May the Prince arrived with his suite at Claridge's. Augustus took him to see the Royal Academy, the National Gallery, the Tower of London and accompanied him to Oxford when he was given an honorary degree. Throughout the season he went to a great many parties, where royalties, English and German, were present in numbers, dukes and duchesses past counting, and in fact everyone who was anyone. At a ball at Lady Salisbury's Augustus presented so many of his relations to the Prince that he said what astonished him more than anything in England was the multitude of Mr. Hare's cousins.

The years wore on. Augustus continued to travel, to go to house parties, and when in London to dine out. The period when visits to country houses often lasted weeks, and even months, was long since a thing of the past. It was become usual to have guests for the week-end. Augustus rarely accepted such invitations; he preferred to spend his Sundays in London. He went to church to hear the preacher who was the fashion of the day, and then, perhaps after a stroll in the Park, went out to lunch. Luncheon parties on Sunday, not yet quite killed by the week-end habit of going into the country, were popular. The most famous of these were given by Lady Dorothy Neville and to them Augustus often went. In the afternoon there was generally a tea-party to go to, and someone was sure to ask him to dinner or supper.

But even dukes and duchesses are mortal. The day comes when the chatelaines of great castles are displaced by their daughters-in-law and either retire to a dower house or establish themselves in Bath or Bournemouth. Augustus began to spend more time at Holmhurst, and was apt to come up to London only when a brilliant marriage or an important funeral made it necessary. The company he kept was not so choice as it had been. He had never much frequented that of Americans or Jews. In his early years he found the Americans he met on his travels vulgar, but he grew more tolerant with age, and when Mr. Astor bought Clivedon and asked him to stay he thought him genial and unassuming. Money was becoming a power. Aforetime, when a person of title married the daughter of a wealthy manufacturer, Augustus, on mentioning the fact, passed it over lightly and it was almost with surprise that he noted in his Journal that the new countess was unaffected and

ladylike. Now not only younger sons, but heirs to great titles were marrying into Jewish families.

The nineties came. Augustus did not like them. He was getting on for sixty and many of his old friends had died. The pace of life had increased. A different generation amused itself in a different way. There were no longer ladies of artistic inclinations to go on a drawing-party with him to 'dirty, picturesque St. Bartholomew's'; there were no longer ladies of high rank with whom he could have edifying conversation on religious subjects; no longer could he spend pleasant evenings with his portfolio showing his sketches to an appreciative circle, and no longer was he pressed to tell his famous stories. There was no more conversation. The size and lateness of dinners had killed society. The time had passed when a brilliant talker could 'hold forth' and the company was prepared to listen. Now everybody wanted to talk and nobody wanted to listen. Perhaps Augustus was beginning to seem a bit of a bore; and as the decade wore on there was more than one evening in the year when no one asked him to dinner. He had an affectionate disposition, and by the time I came to know him, he still had a number of friends who were attached to him, but when they spoke of him it was with as it were a shrug of the shoulders, with a smile kindly enough, but with a suspicion of apology. He had become faintly ridiculous.

The reader can hardly have read so far without its having crossed his mind that Augustus was something of a snob. He was. But before I deal with this I should like to point out that the word has in the course of years somewhat changed its significance. When Augustus was young gentlemen 'wore straps to their trousers, not only when riding, but always: it was considered the *ne plus ultra* of snobbism to appear without them' (so in the days of my own youth it was considered to wear brown boots in London). I take it that when Augustus wrote this, snobbish was equivalent to vulgar or common. I have a notion that the sense it now has was given it by Thackeray. Of course Augustus was a snob. But here, like Thomas Diafoirus in *Le Malade Imaginaire*, I am inclined to say: '*Distingo, Mademoiselle.*' The Oxford Dictionary defines the snob as 'one who meanly or vulgarly admires and seeks to imitate, or associate with, those of superior rank or wealth; one who wishes to be regarded as a person of social importance.' Well, Augustus didn't wish to be regarded as a person of social importance; it had never occurred to him that he was anything

else. Not to have regarded him as such would have seemed to him merely a proof of your crass ignorance. He did not meanly or vulgarly seek to associate with those of superior rank. His grandfather was Mr. Hare-Naylor of Hurstmonceaux, and he counted at least three Earls as his cousins, several times removed certainly, but cousins none the less. He had always moved in the highest circles of society, indeed it was for them that he had written one of his most successful books, *The Story of Two Noble Lives*, and he regarded no one as his superior. He had not, like Abraham Hayward, wormed his way into those circles by intelligence, or wit, but taken his place in them by right of birth. Yet most people looked upon Augustus as an outrageous snob.

On one occasion, after I had known him for some years, I happened to be at a party when the conversation turned upon this trait of his, not with malice, but with an amused indulgence. At that time when you had dined out it was polite to call within a week, and though you hoped to find your hostess not at home it was only decent to ask whether she was. Sometimes, in my nervousness, when the butler opened the door to me I could not for the life of me remember the name of the lady on whom I was paying this visit of courtesy. I spoke of this and added that when I told Augustus how great my embarrassment was when this occurred to me, he answered: 'Oh, but that often happens to me, but I just say, "Is her ladyship at home?" and it's always right.' Everyone laughed and said: 'How exactly like Augustus!' I was somewhat taken aback when twenty years later I read this little quip of mine in a book of memoirs, for there was not a word of truth in it; I had invented it on the spur of the moment merely to amuse the company. But it was sufficiently characteristic of Augustus to be remembered. I have written this essay partly to make reparation to his memory.

It was inexcusable of me thus to make fun of Augustus, because his kindness to me was great. He took an interest in my career as a novelist. 'The only people worth writing about,' he told me, 'are the lower classes and the upper. No one wants to read about the middle classes.' He could not have foreseen that a time would come when, so low has the stock of the upper classes fallen, no self-respecting novelist would introduce a person of rank into his fiction except as a figure of fun. Augustus felt that as a medical student at St. Thomas's Hospital I must have learnt as much as was needful about the lower orders, but he thought I

should acquire more than a superficial knowledge of the manners and customs of the nobility and gentry. With this object in view he took me to call on various of his old friends, and finding I had not made too bad an impression, asked them to invite me to their parties. I was glad enough to have the opportunity to enter a world new to me. It was not the great world, for by then Augustus had lost touch with it; it was a world of elderly gentlefolk who lived in discreet, rather dull splendour. I was no credit to Augustus and if they continued to invite me it was for his sake rather than for mine. Like most young men, then and now, I thought my youth a sufficient contribution to the entertainment of the company. I had not learnt that when you go to a party it is your business to do your best to add to its success. I was silent and even if I had had anything to say would have been too shy to say it. But I kept my eyes and my ears open, and I learnt one or two things that I have since found worth knowing. I was once at a great dinner of twenty-four people in Portland Place. Of course all the men were in tails and white ties and the women, in satins and velvets, with long trains, were richly jewelled. We walked down the stairs to the dining-room in a long procession, giving our arm to the lady whom we had been instructed to 'take down.' The table blazed with old silver, cut glass and flowers out of season. The dinner was long and elaborate. At the end of it the ladies, on catching the hostess's eye, rose and trooped up to the drawing-room, leaving the men to drink coffee and liqueurs, smoke and discuss the affairs of the nation. I found myself sitting then next to an old gentleman whom I knew to be the Duke of Abercorn. He asked me my name and when I gave it, said: 'I'm told you're a very clever young man.' I made an appropriately modest reply, and he took out of his tail pocket a large cigar-case.

'Do you like cigars,' he asked me, as he opened it and displayed to my view a number of handsome Havanas.

'Very much,' I said.

I didn't see fit to tell him that I couldn't afford to buy them and smoked one only when it was offered me.

'So do I,' he said, 'and when I come to dinner with a widow lady I always bring my own. I advise you to do the same.'

He looked carefully over those in his case, picked one out, put it up to his ear and slightly pressed it to see that it was in perfect condition, and then snapped the case shut and put it back in his

pocket. It was good advice he gave me, and since I have been in a position to do so I have taken it.

Augustus, though indulgent, did not spare reproof when he thought it was good for me. One Tuesday morning, when I had been spending the week-end with him, the post brought me a letter which he must have written soon after my departure. 'My dear Willie,' it ran. 'Yesterday when we came in from our walk you said you were thirsty and asked for a *drink*. I have never heard you vulgar before. A gentleman does *not* ask for a *drink*, he asks for *something to drink*. Yours affectionately. Augustus.'

Dear Augustus ! I'm afraid that if he were alive now he would find the whole English-speaking world as vulgar as he found me then.

On another occasion when I told him I had been somewhere by bus, he said stiffly : 'I prefer to call the conveyance to which you refer an omnibus'; and when I protested that if he wanted a cab he didn't ask for a cabriolet, 'Only because people are so uneducated today they wouldn't understand,' he retorted. Augustus was of opinion that manners had sadly deteriorated since his youth. Few young men knew how to behave in polite society, and how could you wonder when there was no longer anyone to teach them? In this connection he was fond of telling a story about Caroline, Duchess of Cleveland. She had rented Osterley and had a number of people staying with her. She was lame and walked with an ebony stick. One day when they were all sitting in the drawing-room the duchess got up, and a young man, thinking she wanted to ring the bell, sprang to his feet and rang it for her; whereupon she hit him angrily over the head with her stick and said : 'Sir, officiousness is not politeness.' 'And quite right too,' said Augustus, and then in an awe-struck tone : 'For all he knew she might have wanted to go to the water-closet.' Even duchesses are subject, his lowered voice indicated, to natural necessities. 'She was a very great lady,' he added. 'She's the last woman who ever smacked her footman's face in Bond Street.' He thought with nostalgia of his own grandmother, the wife of the Reverend Oswald Leicester, who habitually boxed the ears of her maids. Those were the brave days of old, when servants were prepared to suffer corporal punishment at the hands of their mistresses.

Augustus published the first three volumes of *The Story of My Life* in 1896 and the next three in 1900. Seldom can a work have

been received with such a unanimity of hostile criticism, and it is true that one might cavil at an autobiography even of a very great man in six volumes of nearly five hundred pages each. The *Saturday Review* described it as a monument of self-sufficiency and found it wholly without delicacy. The *Pall Mall Gazette* was filled with genuine pity for a man who could attach importance to a life so trivial. The *National Observer* had not for long met with an author so garrulous and so self-complacent. *Blackwood* asked : 'What is Mr. Augustus Hare?' Mr. Augustus Hare remained superbly indifferent. He had written the book for himself and his relations, as he had written *The Story of Two Noble Lives* for 'the upper circles of society,' and not for the general public, and I suppose it never occurred to him that in that case it might have been better to print it privately. Even after the publication of the second three volumes, undeterred he went on with the story, writing every morning, to the very end of his life. There was no one, however, with sufficient piety to publish what was doubtless a bulky manuscript.

To refresh my memory I have recently re-read *The Story of My Life*. What the reviewers said was true enough, but it was not the whole truth. It was apparently the custom of the day when you went abroad to write long descriptions to your friends of the sights you saw, and these letters of his Augustus printed in full. They are tedious. Yet they describe a way of travel, by carriage or *vetturino*, which no longer obtains, and the look of old towns and historic cities the aspect and character of which the advance of civilisation has entirely changed. If a novelist wanted to write a story situated in Rome during the last years of the temporal power he would find in Augustus's pages not a little picturesque material that he could turn to good use. Of course the lists of important persons he met on his visits to great houses are intolerably dull. He had no gift for bringing people to life and they exist merely as names ; though not himself a sayer of good things, he had a quick appreciation of those said by others, and a diligent reader is often rewarded by coming upon a nice repartee. I should have liked to be present when the lady on being reproached for burning the candle at both ends, said : 'Why, I thought that was the very way to make both ends meet.' Augustus inserted in the six volumes of this work all the stories, ghost stories and others, which he used to relate to a group of spell-bound ladies of high rank. Some of them are very good. It is unfortunate

that they should be buried in a mass of twaddle. Augustus suffered from the persuasion that he was a gentleman, and an author, though a voluminous one, only by the way. If he had been a man of letters first and a gentleman next, he might, instead of writing the six volumes of his autobiography, with the material at his disposal have produced two or three books which would have been, not a lively, but at least an interesting, picture of the times.

Augustus had suffered from an affection of the heart for some years, and one morning, in 1903, when the maid went into his room to bring him his cup of tea and his two slices of thin bread and butter, she found him lying on the floor in his night-shirt, dead.

Giacomo Serpotta

BY PETER QUENNELL

IT was the late Roger Fry who, during the course of a lantern lecture delivered before a conventional audience of elderly feminine art-lovers, once lunged with his lecturer's wand towards the Dead Christ of some majestic 'Deposition' and begged, in that peculiarly resounding voice of his, so sibilant and so emphatic, to draw their attention to what he designated the *Imposing Central Mass*. Fry's introduction to the central figure struck his listeners, otherwise highly appreciative, as rather less than reverent. No irreverence was, of course, intended; but those were the days when the consideration of a work of art was carefully dissociated from a study of the emotions that might seem to have inspired it, and when emotional or 'literary' criticism (though Fry himself was too intelligent and sensitive a man to be always quite consistent) among critics who followed his lead was for the most part sternly frowned upon. Today, under the mollifying influence of such writers as Sir Kenneth Clark, the art-historian's approach to his theme is more genial and conciliatory. No longer need the admirer of a beautiful object pretend, as he was usually obliged to do in the 'twenties and the early 'thirties, that the beauty he enjoys is of a purely formal character, that it can be reduced to a harmonious arrangement of colours, contours, masses, without reference to its emotional content or representational value. A refreshing and stimulating change—stimulating not only to the æsthetic hedonist who cannot repress a tremor of alarm should the iron jaws of any intellectual system appear to close around him, but to the lover of art who is also a lover of life, and who sees music and painting, and the varied and fascinating achievements of sculptors, writers, architects, as expressions of a similar will-to-live, born of a similar belief in the possibility of human happiness.

Art is a product of the pride of life—a discovery from which Ruskin could not escape, though he often found it troublesome. He had hoped to prefer the Purists; yet in middle age he came to the reluctant conclusion that, compared with Titian and Veronese

—‘those vagabonds of Venetians,’ whose painting, like their personal lives, gave proof of a ‘good, stout, self-commanding, magnificent Animality’—the earlier, more ascetic Italians, ‘Francia and Angelico, and all the purists, however beautiful,’ were but ‘poor, weak creatures.’¹ Ruskin’s conclusion was as usual extreme. To assert that the greatest artists are always ‘boldly Animal’ is to ignore many manifestations of the protean human genius; but there is no doubt that a delight in the splendour of the world—where Man, far from being the harassed exile a modern Catholic novelist does his best to show us, is a spoiled and privileged guest, surrounded by innumerable opportunities of happiness and self-fulfilment—together with an obstinate faith in our common human destiny, has distinguished almost every artist who deserves to be remembered. Even melancholy is sometimes an aspect of pride; the ravaged faces of Rembrandt’s sitters, and the pallid hollow-cheeked masks of the men and women painted by El Greco, besides suffering and disillusionment, reveal dignity, vitality and an immense reserve of inward nervous strength; while, if we turn by way of contrast to the canvases of Rubens—say, to the portrait of himself and his wife, seated beneath an arbour, wearing their best jewellery and their best clothes—the suggestion that mundane existence is to be enjoyed and valued for its own sake, and that it includes ‘green islands’ of unregenerate pleasure which may do much to console us for the accompanying pains and losses, swells into an affirmation of unashamed self-confidence. The painter has his feet on the earth, and is glad and proud to feel them there.

Personally I have a tenderness for artists whose love of life and of the world of appearances has fought a winning battle against that ‘horror of life’ which the noblest of French nineteenth-century poets declared that he had also experienced since his earliest childhood. Such an artist was Giacomo Serpotta. If the pride of Rubens’ and the gaiety of Renoir’s spirit, their sensuous appreciation of the world of the flesh, seem to have been mixed in with their pigments, Serpotta accomplished the somewhat more unusual feat of translating his pride and gaiety into terms of plaster-work. Of all the artists who have handled stucco, none shows a more fruitful invention, a lighter, more fluid touch, a more appealing sense of natural beauty. But his sense of beauty was regulated and disciplined by an uncommonly exacting sense of form. There was nothing about Serpotta of the naïve provincial craftsman.

¹ See “Ruskin: Love and Economics,” CORNHILL, No. 976.

His talent was essentially urbane ; and this urbanity is the more surprising, since he seldom or never stirred beyond his native province, and executed his best work within the confines of a single city. To Palermo he left his masterpieces, and in Palermo he was content to enjoy the fame those masterpieces brought him. Evidently a sensible, well-balanced man : and so indeed one would have deduced from the portrait-head which stands in the pleasant cloister-gallery outside the Oratorio di S. Lorenzo. Here is a shrewd, dignified, good-natured face that might have belonged to one of the French Encyclopædists. His neck-cloth and wig are plain but neat. On the pedestal of the effigy is merely his name, and numerals indicating that he was born in 1656 and died in 1732. Other information about Serpotta is sparse and hard to come by ; the ordinary English guide-books do not condescend to mention him, while an Italian guide lists several Serpottas, no doubt his brothers or sons, who may have collaborated in his ambitious designs as did Tiepolo's family in the preparation of his frescoes. But Giacomo was clearly the chief designer, and each decorative scheme bears the signature of an extremely individual genius.

Sometimes that signature appears on the walls of private palaces ; for the Palermitan upper classes were rich and cultivated, and in their town and in their country houses maintained an existence of royal prodigality ; but Serpotta's finest surviving works are all associated with some religious edifice—the Oratorio di S. Lorenzo or the yet more fantastic and impressive Oratorio di S. Cita, neither of them a well-known building and both hidden away down quiet, ancient back-streets. In each, Serpotta's exuberant gifts have been devoted to a comparatively small space—small, that is to say, by comparison with the vast naves and lofty side-chapels of most Sicilian churches ; but the space he attacked has been filled completely, and the entire oratory from ceiling to ground-level, and from entrance-door to altar-piece, has been incorporated in the same plan and remodelled at the prompting of the same imagination. The Oratorio di S. Cita, as the stranger of the two, should perhaps be first examined. According to an Italian guide-book, Serpotta worked here at intervals from 1686 to 1718—'a diversity of epochs . . . which explains the stylistic discord of the present modelling' ; its ornamentation, continues the Italian writer, is '*barocchissima, prodigiosamente fantasiosa e originale*'—a description that seems sufficiently just, though

the previous reference to 'stylistic discord' is neither fair nor accurate. True, the scheme is prodigiously bold; statuary large and small, motifs in high and low relief, are thrown together in a bewilderingly complex pattern of bodies, scrolls and draperies; but the rhythm of the design is never broken, and every detail responds to and carries on another. We are conscious of a general harmony long before we attempt an analysis of the component features.

The whole interior surface is richly embellished; but it was on the rear wall, facing the altar, that Serpotta executed his most remarkable feats of taste and virtuosity. That wall depicts, in a gracefully stylised and emblematic fashion, the Battle of Lepanto, with a panel giving a view of the fight, trophies of Turkish arms and two adolescent supporters in the guise of ragged war orphans. The Virgin is enthroned in a panel above; and there are four complementary panels depicting scenes of sacred history. But now observe the device by which these scenes, each deeply set in a quadrangular frame, are presented to the faithful. As in the strange vision accorded to the Apostle Peter on his roof-top, a sheet has been let down from Heaven, upheld around the edges by a score of agile *putti*, who struggle with the cumbersome but delicate stuff, vanish beneath its swags but come bravely thrusting out again. The wrinkles and folds of the heavenly fabric, represented with a loving naturalism that indicates at the same time its softness and its heaviness, form the background of the six panels which the *putti*, among their other tasks, are balancing and steadying. Every moulded frame encloses a sculptural group in miniature, a dramatic episode complete in itself, having the charm and the meticulous distinction of some celestial peep-show.

Characteristic of Serpotta's art is the assurance with which several different scales are managed simultaneously. Thus, while the *putti* are of realistic dimensions, the supporters beneath the central panel have been considerably reduced to fit the space they occupy, and the height of the figures in the panels is barely five or six inches. Even more diminutive is the prospect of the Battle of Lepanto, with the Virgin in the sky above interceding for her devotees, and the lateen-sails of the galleys below filling, rank behind rank, the gulf between two rocky headlands. The foremost galleys are portrayed in the round; and here, as in the companion-pieces, a false perspective has been contrived by the ingenious employment of upward-sloping and converging lines. With

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variety of scale goes variety of surface. Whereas some motifs are in undulant low relief, many figures lean out from the design robustly three-dimensional, and others again are completely detached, as if they symbolised three stages of some vast creative process, the plaster being the primitive clay from which the works of the creator were gradually emerging—rudimentary yet rhythmic shapes and half-formed heavenly presences, at last the perfect human form, serene and mysteriously smiling upon its coign or window-ledge.

To these detached figures one most often returns. Evidently they are offshoots of the Baroque tradition; but, if they inherit the fantasy of the Baroque spirit, they have no share in its violence. Buildings are sometimes compared to ships; and across the façade, and along the skyline, of a Baroque church its statues stand congregated like energetic passengers, frenziedly waving the vessel on, extending their garments in the manner of sails and wrestling against the sea-wind, as they beckon the distant horizon with wildly upraised arms and eyes. A similar enthusiasm pervades the statues that line the nave and chancel; for they are participants in a tremendous drama, and the zest of the Counter-Reformation is still awake within them. Serpotta's religious convictions remain a matter of doubt; we must assume that he was safely orthodox; but the religious passions of the seventeenth century must have been measurably attenuated by the time they reached his soul. They made little impression on his creative method, which reveals fantasy without fanaticism, and exuberance, tinged by extravagance, without a trace of pious rhetoric.

His was a worldly and cheerful faith—one suited to the peace and wealth of a settled, rich community. How prosperous and calm it was we may deduce from the succession of noble country houses, some still inhabited, some derelict and half in ruins, which star the landscape round Palermo. Life passed between a villa at Bagheria and a palace near the Quattro Canti can scarcely have been conducive to the ascetic virtues; and Serpotta's art reflects his society and period, with the modifications imposed by his individual temperament. For luxury is not always gay, nor prosperity attractive; and, while few artists are averse from ease and comfort, the artist, as he absorbs the pleasures of the passing moment, has the knack of reducing them to an essential residue, a distillation of happiness which far outlasts the present day. Women and children crowd Serpotta's designs. Sicilian children

—at least in those districts where a northern influence predominates over the darker, gloomier Saracenic strain—are particularly lively and comely, impertinent and uninhibited; and the *putti* whom Serpotta moulded bear no resemblance to the conventionalised infants of the average sculptor's repertory. Nor do their mothers and sisters conform to a conventional type; and, although they represent Moral Qualities and improving Arts and Sciences, their sensuous and human aspect never disappears beneath the emblematic costume. Charity is the gentlest of human mothers: Fortitude (whom I must later attempt to describe) gives the rôle to which the sculptor has assigned her an astonishingly feminine and entirely unheroic turn.

In the decorative scheme of the Oratorio di S. Lorenzo, a somewhat more formal production than the Oratorio di S. Cita, Serpotta builds up a complex design with equal grace and mastery. The effect is opulent, but never ponderous. Details are fantastically elaborate; yet the designer avoids any air of gimcrack ostentation. Wanting the varied splendours of metal, wood and polished stone, plaster is a difficult material, which may look cold without dignity, and fragile and impermanent without the charm of delicacy. But Serpotta's plasterwork is always intensely alive, as if the inward warmth of the artist's imagination had penetrated and transfigured it, giving to each shape a separate existence, dwelling delightedly on the resilient smoothness of flesh, the airiness of floating draperies, the crisp definition of acanthus-leaf or scallop-shell. Variety of surface takes the place of colouring; and, whereas large expanses of unbroken white are often bleak and frigid, Serpotta, using a monumental scale, gives as much subtlety to the gradations of white as did Oudry in his famous picture, aided, of course, by the southern sunshine, which fills his interiors with a dusty luminous haze and falls in long shafts through wide and high-set windows, glancing over the plump flanks of wrestling or embracing *putti*, and striking the shoulder and breast of an attendant angel.

His angels have most of them a curious family likeness, and belong to the same enchanting family as Fortitude and Modesty and Astronomy, and other projections of virtue and wisdom whom Serpotta enthroned in niches or pinnacled on sumptuous ornamental brackets, to look down from either side of the nave upon the throng of worshippers. But, although they are lifted over the heads of the crowd, these sympathetic and beguiling personages

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seem half inclined to join it. Here and there, disdaining the fashions prescribed by contemporary neo-classicism, they are wearing the dresses of the late seventeenth- or early eighteenth-century—panniered skirts, stiffly embroidered bodices, feathers crowning their hair and ruffles at their elbows. In body they are tall and slender, and in movement—for all are extremely animated—they produce a peculiar impression of suppleness and fluency. Had Serpotta a model he loved? Or was he, throughout his life, haunted by a visionary idea of physical perfection? Certainly Botticelli's virgins and angels are not more recognisably Botticellian than Serpotta's figures, in their worldlier way, unmistakably creations of the Sicilian stuccoist's fancy. Their mouths are small: their noses are straight: cheeks full and smooth run down with the line of the jaw towards a neatly pointed chin: their expressions are sensuous and feline, the shadow of a provocative smile sometimes hovering about the lips and eyes. Typical is the image of Fortitude. With her right hand poised on her hip brushing back her over-skirt, she is a young woman in a new dress who has burst into the sculptor's studio and, striking a pose and turning on her heel, demands that he admire it. She swings her draperies, exhibits her profile. Twisting her smoothly serpentine neck, she sights along her shoulder, while the ostrich-plumes nod from her head, and the scarf to which she has attached them wreathes around her left arm. . . . 'The pride of the peacock is the glory of God; The lust of the goat is the bounty of God . . . The nakedness of woman is the work of God,' William Blake was to declare in one of the simplest and boldest of his prophetic utterances. The vanity of woman, Giacomo Serpotta would appear to have considered, being yet another manifestation of the divine abundance, was not unworthy to be represented within a Christian temple.

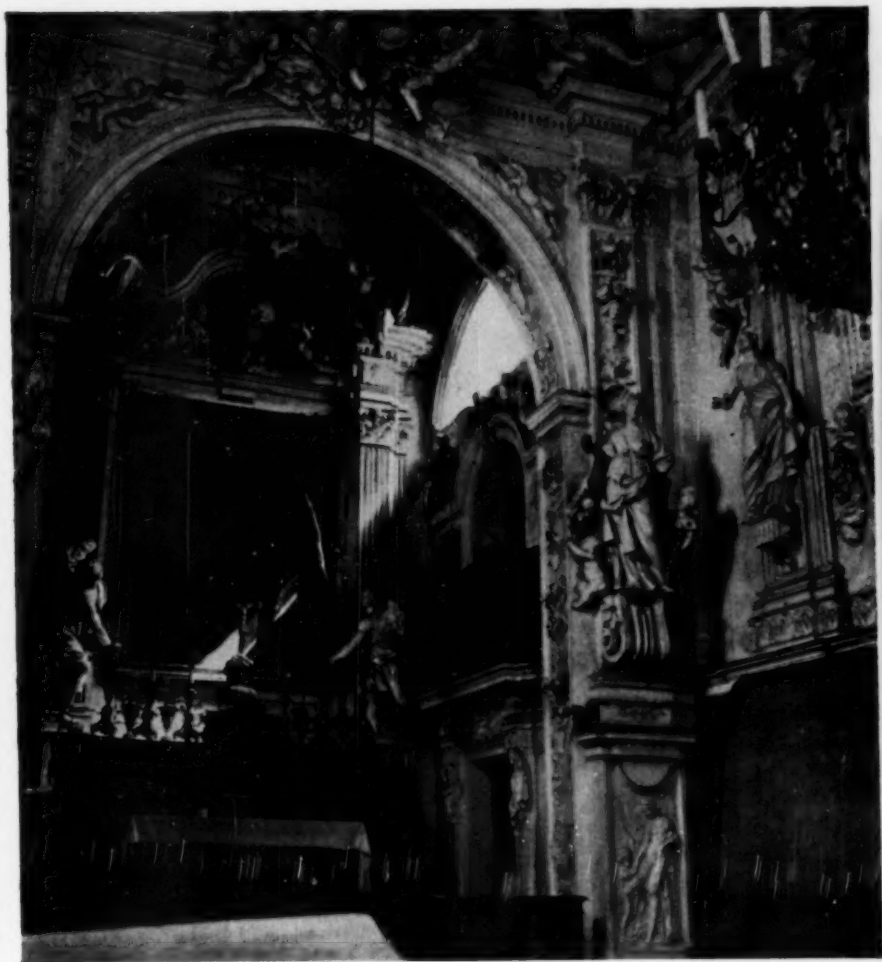


Photographs by Joan Rayner

FORTITUDE



DETAIL OF PLASTERWORK



THE CHANCEL : S. CITA



THE BATTLE OF LEPANTO: ORATORY OF S. CITA

The Concert

BY NOEL BLAKISTON

'**A**RE the others coming?' said Miss Grainger, looking over her shoulder.

'Yes, they're coming,' said Joyce Wainewright, putting her arm into that of the mistress as they were borne along with the crowd out of the Albert Hall.

'A wizard concert, Graingy.'

'Did you enjoy it? I'm so glad.'

Out in the road the girls gathered round Miss Grainger. 'Are we all here?' she said, peering. Miss Grainger was short-sighted. She had reddish untidy hair and a white skin and was plump and good-natured and young. She was never known to be in a bad temper. The girls loved her.

'Joyce, Ruth, Emma, Betty, Jennifer, Yvonne, Maud—Where's Jane? Anyone seen Jane?'

They looked around. The crowd was flowing past them, but there was no Jane. They waited.

'It'll be very tiresome of her if she makes us miss the bus,' said Miss Grainger. 'We've just got nice time. Let's see'—she blinked at her watch—'yes, we've just five minutes. If we miss that one we'll have to wait three-quarters of an hour for the next.'

They waited and the crowd began to be thinner.

'What can have happened to her?'

'Perhaps she went to the lav.'

'Not again. She went in the interval.'

'She's always going! She went twice in Current Affairs yesterday!'

'She went at the beginning of gym. the other day and didn't come back till it was practically over.'

'She doesn't really want to, I'm sure. It's only to get away.'

'I believe,' said Joyce, 'that she practically spends her life in the Dames, Damen, Donne, Toilette, Ritirata or Ladies' Convenience.'

'Oh, there's the bus,' Miss Grainger broke in. 'Oh dear! What had we better do? Now you, some of you, run and get on the bus and the rest of us will stay and find Jane!'

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'No, Graingy,' said Joyce, 'it's much better that we all stay together. Anyhow, look! We're too late now to get the bus!'

'Oh dear,' said Miss Grainger. 'Miss Edgeworth will be so annoyed.'

'Don't worry, Graingy. We'll see that you get all your little girls home safely. Don't bother about Maria.'

The group moved back slowly towards the hall.

'Hadn't we better send out a search-party?' said Joyce.

'Perhaps we had,' said Miss Grainger. 'But there had better be two parties. She may have gone out of some other exit. You, Joyce and Maud, go round that way, and you, Rosie and Yvonne, go round that way and see if you can find her. We'll be waiting here. And don't get lost, you!'

'O.K., Graingy.'

The adventure was being enjoyed by all the girls. Dusk was coming on. It would be quite dark before the next bus came and after eleven by the time they got back to school. The last stragglers were now coming away from the hall.

'She's funny, isn't she, Miss Grainger?' said Emma, a girl who looked as old-fashioned as her name. With her hair drawn back tight from her forehead, she looked like Alice in Wonderland.

'Who?'

'Jane—Jane Martin. But I like her, don't you?'

'Of course I like her. I like you all. But I wish she wouldn't be quite so odd sometimes.'

'It's because she's had a lonely upbringing in the depths of the country, Miss Grainger. Joyce is always ragging her, but I like her,' Emma insisted.

After several minutes the search-parties came back leading their captive. They had found her on the other side of the building.

'How on earth did you get round there?' said Miss Grainger. 'You must have seen the way we went out.'

'I'm sorry, I'm awfully sorry. I lost you. And then people seemed to be going out all sorts of ways and I got lost.'

'Well, it can't be helped now. We've missed the bus. I hope Miss Edgeworth won't be angry.'

'Why do you keep saying that, Graingy?' said Joyce. 'Are you afraid of Maria?'

'Yes, of course.'

'Coo, I'm not! Are you, Maud?'

'No!'

'And you, Ruth?'

'No, of course not!'

'And you? And you? And you? And you? And you?'

'A little bit,' 'Not on your life,' 'No,' came the answers, and 'Yes' from Rosie and Emma.

'And you, Jane?'

'And me what?'

'Isn't that like her not to be listening?' Joyce looked round for confirmation, raised long-suffering eyes to heaven and sighed theatrically. 'Jane, I was asking you whether you're afraid of Marpots?'

Miss Grainger winced at the vulgar form of the headmistress's nickname. The nickname itself, current even among the staff, was admissible. It was sanctioned by the highest usage and had recently appeared in print. An old girl, Evelyn Coutts-Calderon, had had a book of poetry published. It was dedicated 'To Maria: In homage.' But the name had some unattractive variants.

'Please, Joyce! Please!' said Miss Grainger, at the horrid word.

'Sorry, Graingy, it just slipped out.'

'Now!' said Miss Grainger, shepherding the party across the road. 'Cross now!'

They walked along the pavement on the other side of Kensington Gore and then into the park. Joyce continued her interrogation.

'Jane, are you afraid of Miss Edgeworth?'

Jane thought.

'Look at her!' said Joyce. 'How like her! She's thinking before she speaks! No, honestly Jane, I'm not trying to be nasty but you really are rather awful. Why can't you just say something and take forty bites before every mouthful afterwards?'

'I shouldn't answer, Jane, if you don't want to,' said Miss Grainger kindly.

'No, I'll answer. The answer is, I don't know.'

'Hearken, all ye!' said Joyce. 'Isn't that Jane all over? Jane, I despair of you. It wouldn't be so bad if you were just keen. You're not that exactly. You're worse. You're so sincere!'

'I thought it was a very good answer,' said Miss Grainger.

'Let's play "Touch-you-last,"' said Joyce. Suddenly the girls scattered, darting among the trees, laughing and screaming. Miss Grainger strolled slowly onwards, remaining the nucleus of the group. She had meant what she said about Jane's answer. The

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fact was, you did not really know about Miss Edgeworth. You not only did not know whether she was going to be angry but, when confronted with her, you often could not tell whether she *was* angry or not. Her manner was at all times so shy and strained, it seemed that the words she uttered conveyed only a fraction of what she meant. When she *did* utter—for there were those famous silences. The hands not only of girls and mistresses but of lecturers and visiting preachers, the parental hands of stockbrokers, generals and strapping hunting ladies, grew damp and fingered the chintz of Miss Edgeworth's sofa as their owners sat there trying to think of something to say. Everyone would agree that Miss Edgeworth's company was not easy. Where opinions differed was over the question of what lay behind her awkward exterior. There were those who thought her hard and unsympathetic. There were certain older members of the staff who held that, though no doubt she would have made an excellent University don, she ought never to have had anything to do with girls. Girls need to know where they stand with a mistress, and with Miss Edgeworth they never did know. Many parents, who had thought of sending their children to the school, decided, after their embarrassing half-hour on the sofa, that they could not entrust their daughters to the hands of that cold, difficult little woman. And those who decided to send them often did so with misgiving. 'I can't see what's supposed to be so wonderful about her,' said Jane's mother. 'She looks to me half-baked, as though she hadn't finished growing up herself yet.'

'Not necessarily a bad thing, my dear,' said Mr. Martin, 'in one who is bringing up the young. I think she's magnificent. She's like Queen Victoria.'

'She's certainly very short.'

Jane's father, after one interview, had voiced the contrary opinion about Miss Edgeworth, the opinion at which most girls, before they left, arrived. For the headmistress certainly had her adherents. Those girls particularly who, in their last year, had the good fortune to belong to her small and select English class generally became ardent admirers. Her teaching of English literature was apparently most inspiring. It was as though in her classroom she suddenly felt safe. She could let herself go. Girls, for whom she had been merely a prim tight little figure making an announcement after hall or reading a prayer in chapel, were astonished at the torrent of enthusiasm which she released within those four

walls. 'It's not just literature, it's life too. She knows so much about life,' Evelyn had said, already at seventeen a poetess, already able to look back on a vivid and various emotional career. 'I am sure she has had at least one shattering love-affair.'

Jane had not yet reached the English class. To her Miss Edgeworth was still a distant and enigmatic figure. But she held two secrets about the headmistress which disposed her favourably towards her. Only if, as seemed most unlikely, Miss Edgeworth were to turn out a positive dragon would Jane give away the two occasions on which she had caught her off her guard. One of these occasions was in the matter of the cherry stones. A notice had appeared on the board signed, it is true, by Miss Edgeworth, but in the handwriting of Miss Russell, the second mistress, saying that all the cherry stones about the place looked disgracefully untidy and were a nuisance. In future no cherries were to be eaten either out of doors or in the passages. Anybody caught making a litter with cherry stones would have a detention.

'Oh, but Graingy,' said Maud, turning away disconsolately from the notice-board, 'it's such fun treading them out!'

'Well, you must think of some other kind of fun now. Miss Russell is very angry about the cherry stones.'

'Miss Russell,' Maud muttered under her breath, 'is a *cochon*!'

The same afternoon Jane happened to look out of the window of the end closet in Upper Lavatories. This window commanded a view down a paved passage between walls that led away to the back regions. Coming along the passage towards her, her eyes on the ground, was Miss Edgeworth. Suddenly the headmistress stopped and looked over her shoulder. The passage was deserted. She stepped back a pace and to the side, and put her foot out and pressed. There was a pop as the cherry stone broke. Then Miss Edgeworth remembered to look up.

I hope she didn't see me, thought Jane, bobbing back out of sight as quickly as she could, but not so quickly as to have failed to observe on Miss Edgeworth's face a broad grin.

The other secret had been acquired during the same summer term. Jane had been sent with a message to the headmistress in her study. She had found the door ajar, but heard Miss Edgeworth's voice within. She had peeped inside. There was Miss Edgeworth, sitting in an armchair, her feet on a footstool, reading aloud to herself from a French book. Miss Edgeworth's English may have been perfect, but even Jane knew enough French to be

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aware that her pronunciation of French could be much improved. Thus, whenever she had a moment to spare, the headmistress, by reading to herself aloud, would seek to remedy a weakness in her education. The words that Jane heard that afternoon were: '*Son père, Monsieur Charles-Denis-Bartholomé Bovary, ancien aide-chirurgien-major, compromis, vers eighteen twelve, dans des affaires de conscription, et forcé—*' Miss Edgeworth stopped, took her feet off the footstool, sat more upright, and began again: '*Son père, Monsieur Charles-Denis-Bartholomé Bovary, ancien aide-chirurgien-major, compromis, vers mil—mil huit cent douze, dans des affaires de conscription, et forcé . . .*' As Jane looked and listened, she felt, even more than she had felt at the lavatory window, how vulnerable Miss Edgeworth was. It seemed to her that she held the headmistress, like a precious and terribly fragile little china jug, in her hand. How terribly easy to shatter her! Withdrawing her head and retreating on tiptoe some way along the passage, she approached the study again, at a noisy run, so that Miss Edgeworth heard her coming.

* * *

'Now, girls!' called Miss Grainger, 'it's time we began wending back.'

Presently the group was standing on the pavement under the light of a lamp, waiting for the bus.

'You haven't yet told me properly what you thought of the concert,' said Miss Grainger.

'It was lovely, Graingy.'

'It was wizard.'

'Awfully good!'

'Wonderful!'

'Wasn't Molkov adorable?' Molkov was the pianist.

'Adorable!'

'Oh, wasn't he sweet?'

'He simply is my favourite man!'

'I adored those little curls that came over his ears!'

'Oh, and that sort of sad look in his eyes!'

'And the way he shut his eyes and sort of looked as if he was praying or something just before he started!'

'He was all kind of bunjy and nice, wasn't he?'

'Didn't you think he was a perfect poppet, Graingy?'

Molkov had been too far away for Miss Grainger, with her short sight, to have an opinion on anything about him except

his playing, and on this, not being in the least musical, she had no opinion. She had in fact only come with this party out of good nature, as Miss Erps had had a headache. She mentioned what seemed to her remarkable about the concert.

'I can't imagine,' she said, 'how he can keep all that music in his head.'

'Talking of heads,' said Joyce, 'did you see that scab on the back of the head of the man in front of me?'

'Did I not!' said Yvonne with enthusiasm. 'Wasn't it a whopper?'

'Yes, I saw it too,' said Jennifer. 'My word!'

'I was simply longing to scratch it off all the time, weren't you?'

'Simply longing!'

'I adore scratching scabs! It's the best thing I know!'

'Except . . .' And Rosie whispered the best thing she knew. There were screams and giggles. Conspiratorial heads came together and heard the best thing that Jennifer knew, that Betty and Ruth and Maud knew. Uproarious common laughter greeted each revelation.

'Girls! Girls!' said Miss Grainger. 'I'm ashamed of you!'

'You're not listening, are you, darling Graingy?' said Joyce. 'It'll spoil everything if you do!' And Joyce, amid the giggles, began to tell the best thing she knew, which was of course going to be far better than any of the other bests.

'Here comes the bus!' said Miss Grainger.

The girls climbed in. Two of them had to stand for the first quarter of an hour. Then people began to get out. At length, after Virginia Water, except for two people in the front, they had the bus to themselves. They were tired and hungry and thirsty, but at the prospect of soon being back they began to revive and chatter. Yvonne started to sing.

'Here we are now!' said Miss Grainger.

They got off the bus, walked a short way along the main road, then along a side road and in at the school-gate and up the drive through the familiar smell of azaleas and rhododendrons and hot fir trees. It was a dark, still night. Only a light or two was on in the school building.

'Don't make such a noise! Hush, Yvonne! You'll wake everybody up.'

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They found some milk and bread and jam and biscuits waiting for them in the hall. Miss Grainger went at once to Miss Edgeworth's study to report the return of the party. When she came back she said :

'It's all right. Miss Edgeworth doesn't seem to be angry. She wants you all to go in and say good night.'

'I hope there won't be a questionnaire,' said Betty. 'I can never think of anything to say.'

'She's bound to ask us which bits we liked best and why, etcetera, etcetera,' said Joyce. 'Here, let's have a look at the programme, so that I can mug it up in case it's me.'

Presently they had finished eating and trooped along to the study.

'Feigns go in first!'

'Feigns!'

'Feigns!'

'Go on, Joyce, you go first!'

Joyce was quite willing to lead the party. She had just thought of something interesting to say to Miss Edgeworth. It should impress her. They found the headmistress standing in the middle of her sparsely furnished room, and formed themselves into a half-circle in front of her, Miss Grainger behind them.

'Well,' said Miss Edgeworth, 'so you've had a good outing?'

'Yes, thank you, Miss Edgeworth.'

'Yes, lovely.'

'Lovely, thank you.'

'Wonderful.'

'And the concert—did you enjoy it?'

'Yes, thank you, it was wonderful.'

'It was grand.'

'Lovely.'

'Awfully nice.'

'I loved it.'

'And Molkov—you have no fault to find with him?'

'No, Miss Edgeworth, absolutely none.'

'He was wonderful.'

'He was awfully good.'

Now, thought Joyce, now's my chance.

'I thought he played a bit too fast,' she said. 'He was sort of——'

'He was "sort of" nothing, Joyce.'

'I mean'—and Joyce wished she had not embarked on these statements—'I mean it was like someone talking French very fast and you can't keep up.'

A look of interest had come into the headmistress's face. Quick, Joyce, withdraw! Get out of it while you can! She'll begin asking you, Where? When? In which bits do you mean?

'I mean just in general,' said Joyce, 'not particularly. Just sort of here and there, not all the time of course.' Joyce gave an awkward, apologetic laugh.

'Oh,' said Miss Edgeworth, and the interested look disappeared from her face.

There was silence in the room for some moments.

'And you, Jane,' said Miss Edgeworth, 'the lost sheep—you don't seem to have spoken. Did you enjoy it?'

'Yes, very much, thank you.'

There was silence again.

'It——' Jane began but did not go on.

'Yes?' said Miss Edgeworth encouragingly.

'Well, it's the first time I've ever been to a concert. I mean a proper one like that. I didn't know it would be like that. It was awfully exciting.'

'Yes?'

'It wasn't really till the last piece, the Beethoven. I wasn't listening particularly, and then suddenly there was a bit that had just passed and I so hoped it would come again, and then suddenly there it was, but I knew just before it came.'

There was a titter from the girls.

'Yes, Jane?' said Miss Edgeworth.

'Well, then, of course, I waited for it again, because I was almost sure it would come once more, and then it did. It was sort of—sort of——'

The girls listened for a rebuke, but none came. Miss Edgeworth's face was an expressionless royal mask.

'Yes?' she said.

'It was like mountains at the beginning of the bit, or clouds going away behind each other into the distance very very far, and then it changed and you seemed to be on a line going down sideways like this'—Jane moved her hand in a vague way—'and then along straight for a little, and then down again in the same direction as the time before, and then suddenly there was something else and it was all over.'

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Miss Edgeworth's expression, or lack of expression, kept the titters, if there were any, this time inaudible.

'And then,' Jane went on, 'I thought it couldn't come again and everything was finished, but then suddenly there it was again. Oh, Miss Edgeworth, it was so exciting! I think it's easily the best thing I've ever known. Just after that the piece was over and that was the end of the concert and everything was ordinary again, and there were all the girls just the same as ever, and Miss Grainger, and I felt I had to stay away from them, and so I got lost.'

There was an intaking of breath among the girls at Jane's outrageous words. Miss Grainger blushed crimson. There was a silence. Jane, now that her secret was out, was near the end of her power of control. As she realised the enormity of what she had just said, she would probably, had the silence lasted a moment longer, have burst into tears. But Miss Edgeworth spoke:

'You certainly seem to have had some interesting experiences, Jane. The rest of you can go to bed. Good night. You, Jane, stay.'

'Good night, Miss Edgeworth.'

'Good night, Miss Edgeworth.' Miss Grainger took herself, gladly, as being included in the dismissal.

Jane was left alone with the headmistress. She felt sick with fear. What on earth was going to happen to her? Presently Miss Edgeworth spoke:

'What you just said about the music, Jane, was very good.'

The headmistress's voice was so far from being angry that Jane risked looking her in the face. Instead of that look which seemed to be concentrated on nothing in particular, she found Miss Edgeworth's eyes fixed intently upon her. Her own eyes dropped at once to a point on the fender to which they clung. In the heart-to-heart 'jaw' which she felt impending she must have something to cling to.

'Art is like that,' Miss Edgeworth went on. 'It lifts you up, then sets you down.'

There was a pause.

'And leaves you down.'

'Yes,' Jane murmured faintly.

There was another pause.

How long had this jaw been going on for? Jane had the feeling that it had already lasted an age. Her eyes were becoming quite sore with clinging to the fender. Surely one would soon be coming to the climax?

'Life, too, is like that,' the headmistress went on.

The words were platitudinous but Jane felt them to come directly from the heart, to be weighted with an experience.

'Heaven suddenly seems to open——'

Jane, clinging on desperately, felt herself quite unworthy to receive all this confession. It was infinitely flattering, of course, to be spoken to as a woman, but the responsibility of hearing all these secrets was very great.

'—then it's not there any more. But you are. And you've got to go on.'

The little china jug in Jane's hand was becoming unbearably precious. Surely the headmistress would realise that she had said enough?

'Things seem very difficult then, and it is then that you must make a particular effort to be—polite.'

'Yes,' Jane murmured, feeling that the climax was now passing.

After a moment Miss Edgeworth said in a different voice: 'You were very rude to Miss Grainger and to the other girls and you were very silly to get lost like that. You will be in detention for the rest of the term.'

The punishment was an extremely severe one. It meant that on every half-holiday for the rest of the term, while the other girls were out, Jane would have to stay at her desk in her classroom engaged on 'some serious employment.' There were two half-holidays a week and six weeks more of term. But Jane was so happy she could have laughed. Her eyes at last left the fender and met Miss Edgeworth's.

'Oh, thank you,' she said. 'Thank you, thank you!'

'Now run along and apologise to Miss Grainger.'

Miss Edgeworth put out her hand. Jane, not knowing what she was meant to do with it, took it in both of hers and made a kind of curtsy.

'Good night, Miss Edgeworth,' she said, and bounded out of the study and along the passage and burst into Miss Grainger's room.

'Darling Graingy,' she said, throwing her arms round the mistress. 'I love you, I love you! I didn't mean what I said! I didn't know what I was saying! Forgive me! Forgive me!'

'Don't be so silly!' said Miss Grainger, kissing the girl and blinking and laughing. 'There's nothing to forgive. Here, have one of these marsh-mallows. Now run along to bed. You ought to have been asleep hours ago.'

THE CONCERT

Jane shared a bedroom with Joyce, Maud and Yvonne. She found the other girls already in bed.

'Well, what did you get?' they asked.

'Detention for the rest of the term.'

'Phew!' said Joyce. 'Oh, I must say! Though of course you did sort of ask for it, Jane. But, I must say, that is a bit much!! Bad luck, Jane! Bad luck really! Gosh, she's frightening! Gosh, she's a hag!'

'She isn't,' said Jane. 'She's magnificent! Magnificent!'

The other girls looked at her in astonishment.

Mr. Churchill and F. D. R.

BY ISAIAH BERLIN

IN the now remote year 1928, the eminent English poet and critic Herbert Read published a book dealing with the art of writing English prose. Writing at a time of bitter disillusion with the false splendours of the Edwardian era, and still more with the propaganda and phrasemaking occasioned by the First World War, Mr. Read praised the virtues of simplicity. If simple prose was often dry and flat, it was at least honest. If it was at times awkward, shapeless, and bleak, it did at least convey a feeling of truthfulness. Above all, it avoided the worst of all temptations—inflation, self-dramatisation, the construction of flimsy stucco façades, either deceptively smooth or covered with elaborate baroque detail which concealed a dreadful inner emptiness.

The time and mood are familiar enough : it was not long after Lytton Strachey had set a new fashion by his method of exposing the cant or muddleheadedness of eminent Victorians, after Bertrand Russell had unmasked the great nineteenth-century metaphysicians as authors of a monstrous hoax played upon generations eager to be deceived, after Keynes had successfully pilloried the follies and vices of the Allied statesmen at Versailles. This was the time when rhetoric and, indeed, eloquence were held up to obloquy as camouflage for literary and moral Pecksniffs, unscrupulous charlatans who corrupted artistic taste and discredited the cause of truth and reason, and at their worst incited to evil and led a credulous world to disaster. It was in this literary climate that Mr. Read, with much skill and discrimination, explained why he admired the last recorded words spoken to Judge Thayer by the poor fish peddler Vanzetti—moving, ungrammatical fragments uttered by a simple man about to die—more than he did the rolling periods of celebrated masters of fine writing widely read by the public at that time.

He selected as an example of the latter a man who in particular was regarded as the sworn enemy of all that Mr. Read prized most highly—humility, integrity, humanity, scrupulous regard for sensibility, individual freedom, personal affection—the celebrated but

distrusted paladin of imperialism and the romantic conception of life, the swashbuckling militarist, the vehement orator and journalist, the most public of public personalities in a world dedicated to the cultivation of private virtues, the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the Conservative Government then in power, Mr. Winston Churchill.

After observing that 'these three conditions are necessary to Eloquence—firstly an adequate theme, then a sincere and impassioned mind, and lastly a power of sustainment, of pertinacity,' Mr. Read drove his thesis home with a quotation from the first part of Mr. Churchill's *World Crisis*, which had appeared some four years previously, and added: 'Such eloquence is false because it is artificial . . . the images are stale, the metaphors violent, the whole passage exhales a false dramatic atmosphere . . . a volley of rhetorical imperatives.' He went on to describe Mr. Churchill's prose as being high-sounding, redundant, falsely eloquent, declamatory, which, in Mr. Read's words derived from undue 'aggrandisement of the self' instead of 'aggrandisement of the theme'; and condemned it root and branch.

Mr. Read's view was well received by the young men who were painfully reacting against anything which appeared to go beyond the naked skeleton of the truth, at a time when not only rhetoric but noble eloquence seemed outrageous hypocrisy. Mr. Read spoke, and knew that he spoke, for a post-war generation; the psychological symptoms of the vast and rapid social transformation then in progress, from which the government in power so resolutely averted its gaze, were visible to the least discerning critics of literature and the arts; the mood was dissatisfied, hostile and insecure; the sequel to so much magnificence was too bitter, and left behind it a heritage of hatred for the grand style as such. The victims and casualties of the disaster thought they had earned the right to be rid of the trappings of an age which had heartlessly betrayed them.

Nevertheless, Mr. Read and his audience were profoundly mistaken. What he and they denounced as so much tinsel and hollow pasteboard was in reality solid: it was this author's natural means for the expression of his heroic, highly coloured, sometimes oversimple and even naïve, but always genuine, vision of life. Mr. Read saw only an unconvincing, sordidly transparent pastiche, but this was an illusion. The reality was something very different: an inspired, if unconscious, attempt at a revival. It went against

the stream of contemporary thought and feeling only because it was a deliberate return to a formal mode of English utterance which extends from Gibbon and Dr. Johnson to Peacock and Macaulay, a composite weapon created by Mr. Churchill in order to convey his particular vision. In the bleak and deflationary twenties it was too bright, too big, too vivid, too unsubtle for the sensitive and sophisticated epigoni of the age of imperialism, who, living an inner life of absorbing complexity and delicacy, became unable and certainly unwilling to admire the light of a day which had destroyed so much of what they had trusted and loved. From this Mr. Read recoiled; but his analysis of his reasons was not convincing.

Mr. Read had, of course, a right to his own scale of values, but it was a blunder to dismiss Mr. Churchill's prose as a false front, a hollow sham. Revivals are not false as such: the Gothic Revival, for example, represented a passionate, if nostalgic, attitude towards life, and while some examples of it may appear bizarre, it sprang from a deeper sentiment and had a good deal more to say than some of the thin and 'realistic' styles which followed; the fact that the creators of the Gothic Revival found their liberation in going back into a largely imaginary past in no way discredits them or their achievement. There are those who, inhibited by the furniture of the ordinary world, come to life only when they feel themselves actors upon a stage, and, thus emancipated, speak out for the first time, and are then found to have much to say. There are those who can function freely only in uniform or armour or court dress, see only through certain kinds of spectacles, act fearlessly only in situations which in some way are formalised for them, see life as a kind of play in which they and others are assigned certain lines which they must speak. So it happens—the last war afforded plenty of instances of this—that people of a shrinking disposition perform miracles of courage when life has been dramatised for them, when they are on the battlefield; and might continue to do so if they were constantly in uniform and life were always a battlefield.

This need for a framework is not 'escapism,' not artificial or abnormal or a sign of maladjustment. Often it is a vision of experience in terms of the strongest single psychological ingredient in one's nature: not infrequently in the form of a simple struggle between conflicting forces or principles, between truth and falsehood, good and evil, right and wrong, between personal integrity

and various forms of temptation and corruption (as in the case of Mr. Read), or between what is conceived as permanent and what is ephemeral, or the material and the immaterial, or between the forces of life and the forces of death, or between the religion of art and its supposed enemies—politicians or priests or Philistines. Life may be seen through many windows, none of them necessarily clear or opaque, less or more distorting than any of the others. And since we think largely in words, they necessarily take on the property of serving as an armour. The style of Dr. Johnson, which echoes so frequently in the prose of *Their Finest Hour*, particularly when the author indulges in a solemn facetiousness, was itself in its own day a weapon offensive and defensive; it requires no deep psychological subtlety to perceive why a man so vulnerable as Johnson—who belonged mentally to the previous century—had constant need of it.

II

Mr. Churchill's dominant category, the single, central, organising principle of his moral and intellectual universe, is an historical imagination so strong, so comprehensive, as to encase the whole of the present and the whole of the future in a framework of a rich and multicoloured past. Such an approach is dominated by a desire—and a capacity—to find fixed moral and intellectual bearings, to give shape and character, colour and direction and coherence, to the stream of events.

This kind of systematic 'historicism' is, of course, not confined to men of action or political theorists: Roman Catholic thinkers see life in terms of a firm and lucid historical structure, and so, of course, do Marxists, and so did the Romantic historians and philosophers from whom the Marxists are directly descended. Nor do we complain of 'escapism' or perversion of the facts until the categories adopted are thought to do too much violence to the 'facts.' To interpret, to relate, to classify, to symbolise are those natural and unavoidable human activities which we loosely and conveniently describe as thinking. We complain, if we do, only when the result is too widely at variance with the common outlook of our own society and age and tradition.

Mr. Churchill sees history—and life—as a great Renaissance pageant: when he thinks of France or Italy, Germany or the Low Countries, Russia, India, Africa, the Arab lands, he sees vivid his-

torical images—something between Victorian illustrations in a child's book of history and the great procession painted by Benozzo Gozzoli in the Riccardi Palace. His eye is never that of the neatly classifying sociologist, the careful psychological analyst, the plodding antiquary, the patient historical scholar. His poetry has not that anatomical vision which sees the naked bone beneath the flesh, skulls and skeletons and the omnipresence of decay and death beneath the flow of life. The units out of which his world is constructed are simpler and larger than life, the patterns vivid and repetitive like those of an epic poet, or at times like those of a dramatist who sees persons and situations as timeless symbols and embodiments of eternal, shining principles. The whole is a series of symmetrically formed and somewhat stylised compositions, either suffused with bright light or cast in darkest shadow, like a legend by Carpaccio, with scarcely any nuance, painted in primary colours, with no half tones, nothing intangible, nothing impalpable, nothing half spoken or hinted or whispered: the voice does not alter in pitch or timbre.

The archaisms of style to which Mr. Churchill's wartime speeches have accustomed us are indispensable ingredients of the heightened tone, the formal chronicler's attire, for which the solemnity of the occasion calls. Mr. Churchill is fully conscious of this: the style should adequately respond to the demands which history makes upon the actors from moment to moment. 'The ideas set forth,' he wrote in 1940 about a Foreign Office draft, 'appeared to me to err in trying to be too clever, to enter into refinements of policy unsuited to the tragic simplicity and grandeur of the times and the issues at stake.'

His own narrative consciously mounts and swells until it reaches the great climax of the Battle of Britain. The texture and the tension are those of a tragic opera, where the very artificiality of the medium, both in the recitative and in the arias, serves to eliminate the irrelevant dead level of normal existence and to set off in high relief the deeds and sufferings of the principal characters. The moments of comedy in such a work must necessarily conform to the style of the whole and be parodies of it; and this is Mr. Churchill's practice. When he says that he viewed this or that 'with stern and tranquil gaze,' or informs his officials that any 'chortling' by them over the failure of a chosen scheme 'will be viewed with great disfavour by me,' or describes the 'celestial grins' of his collaborators over the development of a well-concealed conspiracy, he does precisely this; the mock heroic tone—reminiscent

of *Stalky & Co.*—does not break the operative conventions. But conventions though they be, they are not donned and doffed by the author at will : by now they are his second nature, and have completely fused with the first ; art and nature are no longer distinguishable. The very rigid pattern of his prose is the normal medium of his ideas not merely when he sets himself to compose, but in the life of the imagination which permeates his daily existence.

Mr. Churchill's language is a medium which he invented because he needed it. It has a bold, ponderous, fairly uniform, easily recognisable rhythm which lends itself to parody (including his own) like all strongly individual styles. A language is individual when its user is endowed with sharply marked characteristics and succeeds in creating a medium for their expression. The origins, the constituents, the classical echoes which can be found in Mr. Churchill's prose are obvious enough ; the product is, however, unique. Whatever the attitude that may be taken towards it, it must be recognised as a large-scale phenomenon of our time. To ignore or deny this would be blind or frivolous or dishonest. The utterance is always, and not merely on special occasions, formal (though it alters in intensity and colour with the situation), always public, Ciceronian, addressed to the world, remote from the hesitations and stresses of introspection and private life.

III

The quality of Mr. Churchill's latest work is that of his whole life. His world is built upon the primacy of public over private relationships, upon the supreme value of action, of the battle between simple good and simple evil, between life and death ; but, above all, battle. He has always fought. 'Whatever you may do,' he declared to the demoralised French ministers in the bleakest hour of 1940, 'we shall fight on for ever and ever and ever,' and under this sign his own whole life has been lived.

What has he fought for ? The answer is a good deal clearer than in the case of other equally passionate but less consistent men of action. Mr. Churchill's principles and beliefs on fundamental issues have never faltered. He has often been accused by his critics of inconstancy, of veering and even erratic judgment, as when he changed his allegiance from the Conservative to the Liberal Party, to and fro. But with the exception of the issue of protection, when he supported the tariff as Chancellor of the Exchequer in Mr.

Baldwin's cabinet in the twenties, this charge, which at first seems so plausible, is spectacularly false. Far from changing his opinions too often, Mr. Churchill has scarcely, during a long and stormy career, altered them at all. If anyone wishes to discover his views on the large and lasting issues of our time, he need only set himself to discover what Mr. Churchill has said or written on the subject at any period of his long and exceptionally articulate public life, in particular during the years before the First World War: the number of instances in which his views have in later years undergone any appreciable degree of change will be found astonishingly small.

The apparently solid and dependable Mr. Baldwin adjusted his attitudes with wonderful dexterity as and when circumstances required it. Mr. Chamberlain, long regarded as a grim and immovable rock of Tory opinion, altered his policies—more serious than Mr. Baldwin, he pursued policies, not being content with mere attitudes—when the party or the situation seemed to him to require it. Mr. Churchill remained inflexibly attached to first principles.

It is the strength and coherence of his central, lifelong beliefs that has provoked greater uneasiness, more disfavour and suspicion, in the central office of the Conservative Party than his vehemence or passion for power or what was considered his wayward, unreliable brilliance. No strongly centralised political organisation feels altogether happy with individuals who combine independence, a free imagination, and a formidable strength of character with stubborn faith and a single-minded, unchanging view of the public and private good. Mr. Churchill, who believes that 'ambition, not so much for vulgar ends but for fame, glints in every mind,' believes in and seeks to attain—as an artist his vision—personal greatness and personal glory. As much as any king conceived by a Renaissance dramatist or by a nineteenth-century historian or moralist, he thinks it a brave thing to ride in triumph through Persepolis; he knows with an unshakable certainty what he considers to be big, handsome, noble, and worthy of pursuit by someone in high station, and what, on the contrary, he abhors as being dim, grey, thin, likely to lower or destroy the play of colour and movement in the universe. Tacking and bending and timid compromise may commend themselves to those sound men of sense whose hopes of preserving the world they defend are shot through with an often unconscious pessimism; but if the policy they pursue is likely to slow the tempo, to diminish the forces of life, to lower the 'vital and

vibrant energy' which he admires, say, in Lord Beaverbrook, Mr. Churchill is ready for attack.

Mr. Churchill is one of the diminishing number of those who genuinely believe in a specific world order: the desire to give it life and strength is the most powerful single influence upon everything which he thinks and imagines, does and is. When biographers and historians come to describe and analyse his views on Europe or America, on the British Empire or Russia, on India or Palestine, or even on social or economic policy, they will find that his opinions on all these topics are set in fixed patterns, set early in life and later only reinforced. Thus he has always believed in great states and civilisations in an almost hierarchical order, and has never, for instance, hated Germany as such: Germany is a great, historically hallowed state; the Germans are a great historic race and as such occupy a proportionate amount of space in Mr. Churchill's world picture. He denounced the Prussians in the First World War and the Nazis in the Second; the Germans scarcely at all. He has always entertained a glowing vision of France and her culture, and has unalterably advocated the necessity of Anglo-French collaboration. He has always looked on the Russians as a formless, quasi-Asiatic mass beyond the walls of European civilisation. His belief in and predilection for the American democracy are the foundation of his political outlook.

His vision in foreign affairs has always been consistently romantic. The struggle of the Jews for self-determination in Palestine engaged his imagination in precisely the way in which the Italian Risorgimento captured the sympathies of his Liberal forbears. Similarly his views on social policy conform to those Liberal principles which he received at the hands of the men he most admired in the great Liberal administration of the first decade of this century—Asquith, Haldane, Grey, Morley, above all, Lloyd George before 1914—and he has seen no reason to change them, whatever the world might do; and if these views, progressive in 1910, seem less convincing today, and indeed reveal an obstinate blindness to social and economic—as opposed to political—injustice, of which Haldane or Lloyd George can scarcely be accused, that flows from Mr. Churchill's unalterable faith in the firmly conceived scheme of human relationships which he established within himself long ago, once and for all.

IV

It is an error to regard the imagination as a mainly revolutionary force—if it destroys and alters, it also fuses hitherto isolated beliefs, insights, mental habits, into strongly unified systems. These, if they are filled with sufficient energy and force of will—and, it may be added, fantasy, which is less frightened by the facts and creates ideal models in terms of which the facts are ordered in the mind—sometimes transform the outlook of an entire people and generation.

The British statesman most richly endowed with these gifts was Disraeli, who in effect conceived that imperialist mystique, that splendid but most un-English vision which, romantic to the point of exoticism, full of metaphysical emotion, to all appearances utterly opposed to everything most soberly empirical, utilitarian, anti-systematic in the British tradition, bound its spell on the mind of England for two generations.

Mr. Churchill's political imagination has something of the same magical power to transform. It is a magic which belongs equally to demagogues and great democratic leaders: Franklin Roosevelt, who as much as any man altered his country's inner image of itself and of its character and its history, possessed it in a high degree. But the differences between him and the Prime Minister of Britain are greater than the similarities, and to some degree epitomise the differences of continents and civilisations. The contrast is brought out vividly by the respective parts which they played in the war which drew them so closely together.

The Second World War in some ways gave birth to less novelty and genius than the First. It was, of course, a greater cataclysm, fought over a wider area, and altered the social and political contours of the world at least as radically as its predecessor, perhaps more so. But the break in continuity in 1914 was far more violent. The years before 1914 look to us now, and looked even in the twenties, as the end of a long period of largely peaceful development broken suddenly and catastrophically. In Europe, at least, the years before 1914 were viewed with understandable nostalgia by those who after them knew no real peace.

The period between the wars marks a decline in the development of human culture if it is compared with that sustained and fruitful period which makes the nineteenth century seem a unique human achievement, so powerful that it persisted, even during the war which broke it, to a degree which seems astonishing to us now.

The quality of literature, for example, which is surely one of the most reliable criteria of intellectual and moral vitality, was incomparably higher during the war of 1914-1918 than it has been after 1939. In Western Europe alone these four years of slaughter and destruction were also years in which works of genius and talent continued to be produced by such established writers as Shaw and Wells and Kipling, Hauptmann and Gide, Chesterton and Arnold Bennett, Beerbohm and Yeats, as well as such younger writers as Proust and Joyce, Virginia Woolf and E. M. Forster, T. S. Eliot and Alexander Blok, Rilke, Stefan George, and Valéry. Nor did natural science, philosophy, and history cease to develop fruitfully. What has the recent war to offer by comparison?

Yet perhaps there is one respect in which the Second World War did outshine its predecessor: the leaders of the nations involved in it were, with the significant exception of France, men of greater stature, psychologically more interesting, than their prototypes. It would hardly be disputed that Stalin is a more fascinating figure than the Czar Nicholas II; Hitler more arresting than the Kaiser; Mussolini than Victor Emmanuel; and, memorable as they were, President Wilson and Lloyd George yield in the attribute of sheer historical magnitude to Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill.

'History,' we are told by Aristotle, 'is what Alcibiades did and suffered.' This notion, despite all the efforts of the social sciences to overthrow it, remains a good deal more valid than rival hypotheses, provided that history is defined as that which historians actually do. At any rate Mr. Churchill accepts it wholeheartedly, and takes full advantage of his opportunities. And because his narrative deals largely in personalities and gives individual genius its full and sometimes more than its full due, the appearance of the great wartime protagonists in his pages gives his narrative some of the quality of an epic, whose heroes and villains acquire their stature not merely—or indeed at all—from the importance of the events in which they are involved, but from their own intrinsic human size upon the stage of human history; their characteristics, involved as they are in perpetual juxtaposition and occasional collision with one another, set each other off in vast relief.

Comparisons and contrasts are bound to arise in the mind of the reader which sometimes take him beyond Mr. Churchill's pages. Thus Mr. Roosevelt stands out principally by his astonishing appetite for life and by his apparently complete freedom from fear of

the future ; as a man who welcomed the future eagerly as such, and conveyed the feeling that whatever the times might bring, all would be grist to his mill, nothing would be too formidable or crushing to be subdued and used and moulded into the pattern of the new and unpredictable forms of life, into the building of which he, Mr. Roosevelt, and his allies and devoted subordinates would throw themselves with unheard-of energy and gusto. This avid anticipation of the future, the lack of nervous fear that the wave might prove too big or violent to navigate, contrasts most sharply with the uneasy longing to insulate themselves so clear in Stalin or Chamberlain. Hitler, too, in a sense, showed no fear, but his assurance sprang from a lunatic's violent and cunning vision, which distorted the facts too easily in his favour.

So passionate a faith in the future, so untroubled a confidence in one's power to mould it, when it is allied to a capacity for realistic appraisal of its true contours, implies an exceptionally sensitive awareness, conscious or half-conscious, of the tendencies of one's milieu, of the desires, hopes, fears, loves, hatreds, of the human beings who compose it, of what are impersonally described as social and individual 'trends.' Mr. Roosevelt had this sensibility developed to the point of genius. He acquired the symbolic significance which he retained throughout his Presidency, largely because he sensed the tendencies of his time and their projections into the future to a most uncommon degree. His sense, not only of the movement of American public opinion but of the general direction in which the larger human society of his time was moving, was what is called uncanny. The inner currents, the tremors and complicated convolutions of this movement, seemed to register themselves within his nervous system with a kind of seismographical accuracy. The majority of his fellow-citizens recognised this—some with enthusiasm, others with gloom or bitter indignation. Peoples far beyond the frontiers of the United States rightly looked to him as the most genuine and unswerving spokesman of democracy of his time, the most contemporary, the most outward-looking, the boldest, most imaginative, most large spirited, free from the obsessions of an inner life, with an unparalleled capacity for creating confidence in the power of his insight, his foresight, and his capacity genuinely to identify himself with the ideals of humble people.

This feeling of being at home not merely in the present but in the future, of knowing where he was going and by what means and

why, made him, until his health was finally undermined, buoyant and gay : made him delight in the company of the most varied and opposed individuals, provided that they embodied some specific aspect of the turbulent stream of life, stood actively for the forward movement in their particular world, whatever it might be. And this inner *elan* made up, and more than made up, for faults of intellect or character which his enemies—and his victims—never ceased to point out. He seemed genuinely unaffected by their taunts : what he could not abide was, before all, passivity, stillness, melancholy, fear of life or preoccupation with eternity or death, however great the insight or delicate the sensibility by which they were accompanied.

Mr. Churchill stands at almost the opposite pole. He too does not fear the future, and no man has ever loved life more vehemently and infused so much of it into everyone and everything that he has touched. But whereas Mr. Roosevelt, like all great innovators, had a half-conscious premonitory awareness of the coming shape of society, not wholly unlike that of an artist, Mr. Churchill, for all his extrovert air, looks within, and his strongest sense is the sense of the past.

The clear, brightly coloured vision of history, in terms of which he conceives both the present and the future, is the inexhaustible source from which he draws the primary stuff out of which his universe is so solidly built, so richly and elaborately ornamented. So firm and so embracing an edifice could not be constructed by anyone liable to react and respond like a sensitive instrument to the perpetually changing moods and directions of other persons or institutions or peoples. And, indeed, Mr. Churchill's strength (and what is most frightening in him) lies precisely in this : that, unlike Mr. Roosevelt, he is not equipped with numberless sensitive antennae which communicate the smallest oscillations of the outer world in all its unstable variety. Unlike Mr. Roosevelt (and unlike Gladstone and Lloyd George for that matter) he does not reflect a contemporary social or moral world in an intense and concentrated fashion ; rather he creates one of such power and coherence that it becomes a reality and alters the external world by being imposed upon it with irresistible force. As his history of the war shows, he has an immense capacity for absorbing facts, but they emerge transformed by the categories which he powerfully imposes on the raw material into something which he can use to build his own massive, simple, impregnable fortified inner world.

Mr. Roosevelt, as a public personality, was a spontaneous, optimistic, pleasure-loving ruler who dismayed his assistants by the gay and apparently heedless abandon with which he seemed to delight in pursuing two or more totally incompatible policies, and astonished them even more by the swiftness and ease with which he managed to throw off the cares of office during the darkest and most dangerous moments. Mr. Churchill too loves pleasure, and he too lacks neither gaiety nor a capacity for exuberant self-expression, together with the habit of blithely cutting Gordian knots in a manner which often upset his experts ; but he is not a frivolous man. His nature possesses a dimension of depth—and a corresponding sense of tragic possibilities, which Mr. Roosevelt's light-hearted genius instinctively passed by.

Mr. Roosevelt played the game of politics with virtuosity, and both his successes and his failures were carried off in splendid style ; his performance seemed to flow with effortless skill. Mr. Churchill is acquainted with darkness as well as light. Like all inhabitants and even transient visitors of inner worlds, he gives evidence of seasons of agonised brooding and slow recovery. Mr. Roosevelt might have spoken of sweat and blood, but when Mr. Churchill offered his people tears, he spoke a word which might have been uttered by Lincoln or Mazzini or Cromwell but not Mr. Roosevelt, great-hearted, generous, and perceptive as he was.

V

Not the herald of the bright and cloudless civilisation of the future, Mr. Churchill is preoccupied by his own vivid world, and it is doubtful how far he has ever been aware of what actually goes on in the heads and hearts of others. He does not react, he acts ; he does not mirror, he affects others and alters them to his own powerful measure. Writing of Dunkirk he says : ' Had I at this juncture faltered at all in the leading of the nation, I should have been hurled out of office. I was sure that every Minister was ready to be killed quite soon, and have all his family and possessions destroyed, rather than give in. In this they represented the House of Commons and almost all the people. It fell to me in these coming days and months to express their sentiments on suitable occasions. This I was able to do because they were mine also. There was a white glow, overpowering, sublime, which ran through our island from end to end.' And on the twenty-eighth of June of that year he told Lord Lothian, then ambassador in Washington, ' Your

mood should be bland and phlegmatic. No one is downhearted here.'

These splendid sentences hardly do justice to his own part in creating the feeling which he describes. For Mr. Churchill is not a sensitive lens which absorbs and concentrates and reflects and amplifies the sentiments of others ; unlike the European dictators, he does not play on public opinion like an instrument. In 1940 he assumed an indomitable stoutness, an unsundering quality on the part of his people, and carried on. If he did not represent the quintessence and epitome of what his fellow citizens feared and hoped in their hour of danger, this was because he idealised them with such intensity that in the end they approached his ideal and began to see themselves as he saw them : ' the buoyant and imperturbable temper of Britain which I had the honour to express ' —it was indeed, but he had a lion's share in creating it. So hypnotic was the force of his words, so strong his faith, that by the sheer intensity of his eloquence he bound his spell upon them until it seemed to them that he was indeed speaking what was in their hearts and minds. Doubtless it was there ; but largely dormant until he had awoken it within them.

After he had spoken to them in the summer of 1940 as no one has ever before or since, they conceived a new idea of themselves which their own prowess and the admiration of the world has since established as a heroic image in the history of mankind, like Thermopylae or the defeat of the Spanish Armada. They went forward into battle transformed by his words. The spirit which they found within them he had created within himself from his inner resources, and poured it into his nation, and took their vivid reaction for an original impulse on their part, which he merely had the honour to clothe in suitable words. He created a heroic mood and turned the fortunes of the Battle of Britain not by catching the mood of his surroundings (which was not indeed at any time one of craven panic or bewilderment or apathy, but was somewhat confused ; stouthearted but unorganised) but by being stubbornly impervious to it as he has been to so many of the passing shades and tones of which the life around him has been composed.

The peculiar quality of heroic pride and sense of the sublimity of the occasion arises in him not, as in Mr. Roosevelt, from delight in being alive and in control at a critical moment of history, in the very change and instability of things, in the infinite possibilities of the future whose very unpredictability offers endless possibilities of

spontaneous moment-to-moment improvisation and large imaginative moves in harmony with the restless spirit of the time. On the contrary, it springs from a capacity for sustained introspective brooding, great depth and constancy of feeling—in particular, feeling for and fidelity to the great tradition for which he assumes a personal responsibility, a tradition which he bears upon his shoulders and must deliver, not only sound and undamaged but strengthened and embellished, to successors worthy of accepting the sacred burden.

Bismarck is quoted somewhere as having said something to the effect that there was no such thing as political intuition: political genius consisted in the ability to hear the distant hoofbeat of the horse of History—and then by superhuman effort to leap and catch the horseman by the coat-tails. No man has ever listened for this fateful sound more eagerly than Winston Churchill, and in 1940 he made the heroic leap. 'It is impossible,' he writes of this time, 'to quell the inward excitement which comes from a prolonged balancing of terrible things,' and when the crisis finally bursts he is ready because after a lifetime of effort he has reached his goal.

The position of the Prime Minister is unique: 'If he trips he must be sustained; if he makes mistakes they must be covered; if he sleeps he must not be wantonly disturbed; if he is no good he must be pole-axed,' and this because he is at that moment the guardian of the 'life of Britain, her message and her glory.' He trusted Roosevelt utterly, 'convinced that he would give up life itself, to say nothing about office, for the cause of world freedom now in such awful peril.' His prose records the tension which rises and swells to the culminating moment, the Battle of Britain—'a time when it was equally good to live or die.' This bright, heroic vision of the mortal danger and the will to conquer, born in the hour when defeat seemed not merely possible but probable, is the product of a burning historical imagination, feeding not upon the data of the outer but of the inner eye: the picture has a shape and simplicity which future historians will find it hard to reproduce when they seek to assess and interpret the facts soberly in the grey light of common day.

VI

The Prime Minister was able to impose his imagination and his will upon his countrymen, and enjoy a Periclean reign, precisely because he appeared to them larger and nobler than life and lifted them to an abnormal height in a moment of crisis. It was a climate

in which men do not usually like—nor ought to like—living ; it demands a violent tension which, if it lasts, destroys all sense of normal perspective, overdramatises personal relationships, and falsifies normal values to an intolerable extent. But, in the event, it did turn a large number of inhabitants of the British Isles out of their normal selves and, by dramatising their lives and making them seem to themselves and to each other clad in the fabulous garments appropriate to a great historic moment, transformed cowards into brave men, and so fulfilled the purpose of shining armour.

This is the kind of means by which dictators and demagogues transform peaceful populations into marching armies ; it was Mr. Churchill's unique and unforgettable achievement that he created this necessary illusion within the framework of a free system without destroying or even twisting it ; that he called forth spirits which did not stay to oppress and enslave the population after the hour of need had passed ; that he saved the future by interpreting the present in terms of a vision of the past which did not distort or inhibit the historical development of the British people by attempting to make them realise some impossible and unattainable splendour in the name of an imaginary tradition or of an infallible, supernatural leader. Mr. Churchill was saved from this frightening nemesis of romanticism by a sufficiency of that libertarian feeling which, if it sometimes fell short of understanding the tragic aspects of modern despotisms, remained sharply perceptive—sometimes too tolerantly, but still perceptive—of what is false, grotesque, contemptible in the great frauds upon the people practised by totalitarian régimes. Some of the sharpest and most characteristic epithets are reserved for the dictators : Hitler is ' this evil man, this monstrous abortion of hatred and defeat.' Franco is a ' narrow-minded tyrant ' of ' evil qualities ' holding down a ' blood-drained people.' No quarter is given to the Pétain régime, and its appeal to tradition and the eternal France is treated as a repellent travesty of national feeling. Stalin in 1940-1941 is ' at once a callous, a crafty, and an ill-informed giant.'

This very genuine hostility to usurpers, which is stronger in him than even his passion for authority and order, springs from a quality which Mr. Churchill conspicuously shares with the late President Roosevelt—uncommon love of life, aversion for the imposition of rigid disciplines upon the teeming variety of human relations, the instinctive sense of what promotes and what retards or distorts growth and vitality. But because the life which Mr.

Churchill so loves presents itself to him in an historical guise as part of the pageant of tradition, his method of constructing historical narrative, the distribution of emphasis, the assignment of relative importance to persons and events, the theory of history, the architecture of the narrative, the structure of the sentences, the words themselves, are elements in an historical revival as fresh, as original, and as idiosyncratic as the neoclassicism of the Renaissance or the Regency. To complain that this omits altogether too much by assuming that the impersonal, the dull, the undramatic is necessarily also unimportant, may well be just ; but to lament that this is not contemporary, and therefore in some way less true, less responsive to modern needs, than the noncommittal, neutral glass and plastic of those objective historians who regard facts and only facts as interesting and, worse still, all facts as equally interesting—what is this but craven pedantry and blindness ?

VII

The differences between the President and the Prime Minister were at least in one respect something more than the obvious differences of national character, education, and even temperament. For all his sense of history, his large, untroubled, easy-going style of life, his unshakable feeling of personal security, his natural assumption of being at home in the great world far beyond the confines of his own country, Mr. Roosevelt was a typical child of the twentieth century and of the New World ; while Mr. Churchill for all his love of the present hour, his unquenchable appetite for new knowledge, his sense of the technological possibilities of our time, and the restless roaming of his fancy in considering how they might be most imaginatively applied, despite his enthusiasm for Basic English, or the siren suit which so upset his hosts in Moscow—despite all this, Mr. Churchill remains a European of the nineteenth century.

The difference is deep, and accounts for a great deal in the incompatibility of outlook between him and the President of the United States, whom he admired so much and whose great office he held in awe. Something of the fundamental unlikeness between America and Europe, and perhaps between the twentieth century and the nineteenth, seemed to be crystallised in this remarkable interplay. It may perhaps be that the twentieth century is to the nineteenth as the nineteenth was to the eighteenth century. Talleyrand once made the well-known observation that those who had not lived

under the *ancien régime* did not know what true *douceur de vivre* had been. And indeed, from our distant vantage point, this is clear : the earnest, romantic young men of the early part of the nineteenth century seemed systematically unable to understand or to like the attitude to life of the most civilised representatives of the pre-revolutionary world, particularly in France, where the break was sharpest ; the sharpness, the irony, the minute vision, the perception of and concentration upon fine differences in character, in style, the preoccupation with barely perceptible dissimilarities of hue, the extreme sensibility which makes the life of even so 'progressive' and forward-looking a man as Diderot so unbridgeably different from the larger and simpler vision of the Romantics, is something which the nineteenth century lacked the historical perspective to understand.

Suppose that Shelley had met and talked with Voltaire, what would he have felt ? He would most probably have been profoundly shocked—shocked by the seemingly limited vision, the smallness of the field of awareness, the apparent triviality and finickiness, the almost spinsterish elaboration of Voltaire's malice, the preoccupation with tiny units, the subatomic texture of experience ; he would have felt horror or pity before such wanton blindness to the large moral and spiritual issues of his own day—causes whose universal scope and significance painfully agitated the best and most awakened minds ; he might have thought him wicked, but even more he would have thought him contemptible, too sharp, too small, too mean, grotesquely and unworthily obscene, prone to titter on the most sacred occasions, in the holiest places.

And Voltaire, in his turn, would very probably have been dreadfully bored, unable to see good cause for so much ethical eloquence ; he would have looked with a cold and hostile eye on all this moral excitement : the magnificent Saint-Simonian vision of one world (which so stirred the Left-wing young men half a century later), altering in shape and becoming integrated into a neatly organised man-made whole by the application of powerfully concentrated, scientific, technical, and spiritual resources, would to him have seemed a dreary and monotonous desert, too homogeneous, too flavourless, too unreal, apparently unconscious of those small, half-concealed but crucial distinctions and incongruities which gave individuality and savour to experience, without which there could be no civilised vision, no wit, no conversation, certainly no art deriving from a refined and fastidious culture. The moral vision

of the nineteenth century would have seemed to him a dull, blurred, coarse instrument unable to focus those pin-points of concentrated light, those short-lived patterns of sound and colour, whose infinite variety as they linger or flash past are comedy and tragedy—are the substance of personal relations and of worldly wisdom, of politics, of history, and of art.

The reason for this failure of communication was not a mere change in the point of view, but the kind of vision which divided the two centuries. The microscopic vision of the eighteenth century was succeeded by the macroscopic eye of the nineteenth. The latter saw much more widely, saw in universal or at least in European terms; it saw the contours of great mountain ranges where the eighteenth century discerned, however sharply and perceptively, only the veins and cracks and different shades of but a portion of the mountainside. The object of vision of the eighteenth century was smaller and its eye was closer to the object. The enormous moral issues of the nineteenth century were not within the field of its acutely discriminating gaze: that was the devastating difference which the Great French Revolution had made, and it led to something not necessarily better or worse, uglier or more beautiful, profounder or more shallow, but to a situation which above all was different in kind.

Something not unlike this same chasm divides America from Europe (and the twentieth century from the nineteenth). The American vision is larger and more generous; its thought transcends, despite the parochialism of its means of expression, the barriers of nationality and race and differences of outlook, in a big, sweeping, single view. It notices things rather than persons, and sees the world (those who saw it in this fashion in the nineteenth century were considered Utopian eccentrics) in terms of rich, infinitely mouldable raw material, waiting to be constructed and planned in order to satisfy a world-wide human craving for happiness or goodness or wisdom. And therefore to it the differences and conflicts which divide Europeans in so violent a fashion must seem petty, irrational, and sordid, not worthy of self-respecting, morally conscious individuals and nations; ready, in fact, to be swept away in favour of a simpler and grander view of the powers and tasks of modern man.

To Europeans this American attitude, the large vista possible only for those who live on mountain heights or vast and level plains affording an unbroken view, seems curiously flat, without subtlety

or colour, at times appearing to lack the entire dimension of depth, certainly without that immediate reaction to fine distinctions with which perhaps only those who live in valleys are endowed, and so America, which knows so much, to them seems to understand too little, to miss the central point. This does not, of course, apply to every American or European—there are natural Americans among the natives of Europe and vice versa—but it seems to characterise the most typical representatives of these disparate cultures.

VIII

In some respects Mr. Roosevelt half-consciously understood and did not wholly condemn this attitude on the part of Europeans ; and even more clearly Mr. Churchill is in many respects in instinctive sympathy with the American view of life. But by and large they do represent different outlooks, and the very high degree to which they were able to understand and admire each other's quality is a tribute to the extraordinary power of imagination and delight in the variety of life on the part of both. Each was to the other not merely an ally, the admired leader of a great people, but a symbol of a tradition and a civilisation ; from the unity of their differences they hoped for a regeneration of the Western world.

Mr. Roosevelt was intrigued by the Russian Sphinx ; Mr. Churchill instinctively recoiled from its alien and to him unattractive attributes. Mr. Roosevelt, on the whole, thought that he could cajole Russia and even induce her to be assimilated into the great society which would embrace mankind ; Mr. Churchill, on the whole, remained sceptical.

Mr. Roosevelt was imaginative, optimistic, episcopalian, self-confident, cheerful, empirical, fearless, and steeped in the idea of social progress ; he believed that with enough energy and spirit anything could be achieved by man ; he shrank as much as any English schoolboy from probing underneath the surface, and saw vast affinities between the peoples in the world, out of which a new, freer, and richer order could somehow be built. Mr. Churchill was imaginative and steeped in history, more serious, more intent, more concentrated, more preoccupied, and felt very deeply the eternal differences which could make such a structure difficult of attainment. He believed in institutions and the permanent characters of races and classes and types of individuals. His government was organised on clear principles ; his personal private office was run in a sharply disciplined manner. His habits,

though unusual, were regular. He believed in a natural, a social, almost a metaphysical order—a sacred hierarchy which it was neither possible nor desirable to upset.

Mr. Roosevelt believed in flexibility, improvisation, the fruitfulness of using persons and resources in an infinite variety of new and unexpected ways ; his bureaucracy was somewhat chaotic, perhaps deliberately so. His own office was not tidily organised, he practised a highly personal form of government. He maddened the advocates of institutional authority, but it is doubtful whether he could have achieved his ends in any other way.

These dissimilarities of outlook went deep, but both were large enough in scope and both were genuine visions, not narrowed and distorted by personal idiosyncrasies and those disparities of moral standard which so fatally divided Wilson, Lloyd George, and Clemenceau. The President and the Prime Minister often disagreed ; their ideals and their methods were widely different ; in some of the memoirs and gossip of Mr. Roosevelt's entourage much has been made of this ; but the discussion, at all times, was conducted on a level of which both heads of government were conscious. They may have opposed but they never wished to wound each other ; they may have issued contrary instructions but they never bickered ; when they compromised, as they so often did, they did so without a sense of bitterness or defeat, but in response to the demands of history or one another's traditions and personality.

Each appeared to the other in a romantic light high above the battles of allies or subordinates : their meetings and correspondence were occasions to which both consciously rose : they were royal cousins and felt pride in this relationship, tempered by a sharp and sometimes amused, but never ironical, perception of the other's peculiar qualities. The relationship born during the great historical upheaval, somewhat aggrandised by its solemnity, never flagged or degenerated, but retained a combination of formal dignity and exuberant high spirits which can scarcely ever before have bound the heads of states. Each was personally fascinated not so much by the other, as by the idea of the other, and infected him by his own peculiar brand of high spirits.

The relationship was made genuine by something more than even the solid community of interest or personal and official respect or admiration—namely, by the peculiar degree to which they liked each other's delight in the oddities and humours of life and their own active part in it. This was a unique personal bond, which

Harry Hopkins understood and encouraged to the fullest degree. Mr. Roosevelt's sense of fun was perhaps the lighter, Mr. Churchill's a trifle grimmer. But it was something which they shared with each other and with few, if any, statesmen outside the Anglo-American orbit ; their staffs sometimes ignored or misunderstood it, and it gave a most singular quality to their association.

Mr. Roosevelt's public utterances differ by a whole world from the dramatic masterpieces of Mr. Churchill, but they are not incompatible with them in spirit or in substance. Mr. Roosevelt has not left us his own account of his world as he saw it ; and perhaps he lived too much from day to day to be temperamentally attracted to the performance of such a task. But both were thoroughly aware of their commanding position in the history of the modern world, and Mr. Churchill's account of his stewardship is written in full consciousness of this responsibility.

It is a great occasion, and he treats it with corresponding solemnity. Like a great actor—perhaps the last of his kind—upon the stage of history, he speaks his memorable lines with a large, unhurried, and stately utterance in a blaze of light, as is appropriate to a man who knows that his work and his person will remain the object of scrutiny and judgment to many generations. His narrative is a great public performance and has the attribute of formal magnificence. The words, the splendid phrases, the sustained quality of feeling, are a unique medium which convey his vision of himself and of his world, and will inevitably, like all that he has said and done, reinforce the famous public image, which is no longer distinguishable from the inner essence and the true nature of the author : of a man larger than life, composed of bigger and simpler elements than ordinary men, a gigantic historical figure during his own lifetime, superhumanly bold, strong, and imaginative, one of the two greatest men of action his nation has produced, an orator of prodigious powers, the saviour of his country, a mythical hero who belongs to legend as much as to reality, the largest human being of our time.

Gliding Gulls and Going People

BY WILLIAM SANSON

Two girls in high shorts, thin plump thighs redly raw in the blue cold ; a blood-filled man in black broadcloth, his big stomach carrying him like a sail along ; a queer-eyed girl in a transparent white mackintosh ; an old gentleman and an old lady eyeing each other, strangers yet ; a young man, curly-haired and hard-fleshed, whose frank grey eyes bristled with sneaking contempt ; two wives in soldier-peaked hats, navy and nigger, cheery and cake-loving ; a small lean man in blue serge and a woolly checkered cap whose friends and family, at his expense, flowed round him only to exclaim and demand.

Such were some of the six hundred lined up raggedly along the quayside waiting for several strolling ample officers to give them permission to embark. Already the gulls, thick and dark as snow-flakes above, gliding and hovering and always crying, had showered them over with confetti and streamers of white—so that in all their darkish throng they looked like wedding guests come to a white funeral.

The driven smell of kippering smoke blew in gusts from sheds about. Red lead of funnels shone orange against the metal-grey water ; corrugated tin sheds stepped like large mauve flamingoes on their thin pile-legs ; tarred black sheds nudged blue-washed weather-boards of a chandler ; barrels and buckets and drums and feeding-carts spent oil and oil, everywhere oil—these salt things, with a huddled rigging of masts, made up the quay of Mallaig, mainland port on the Sound of Sleat opposite Skye. A place of high rubber boots, of seaman's wool, of oilskins against the fresh wind and the white bright light. And all those people walked straight off the train and from the hotels along the quay to board this excursion steamer to the sea-loch Scavaig and the dark monstrous Cuillins.

* * *

Although their greatest wish was for a refreshing cup of tea, the

navy and the nigger hats remained for some minutes in dumb confabulation on the departing glories of those weird mountains above the Kyle of Lochalsh. Leaning over the rail, while the ship throbbed below and the gulls questioned the air about, their ample bodies almost touched. In speechless approbation they regarded those mountains: some black, some lizard-green as shafts of sun spotlighted them from the indigo anger of clouds above. A wild improbable mass, sun-green and rock-black abstraction, nothing here of the human world, across the metal water huge and towering as a threat from old Norse gods—for even here in Scotland there was the feeling of being on top of the world, on a barren place uncongenial to man.

Little of Scotland, much of cold Viking ferocity. Yet—those two in their dear pleasure saw Scottish hills, they saw what on a hundred calendars had been dreamed and painted for them. Though none were to be seen—stags stood about in cosy might, and there was heather for these two, everywhere, surely, a purple mass of heather—‘a veritable blaze of colour,’ warm paint-box purple. And where now the sun shone sickly green, was there not a golden glow? Gold touching russet? Winking on crofter’s cottage, neat-thatched, washed clean white? Of course one had to admit it was very wild, had one not? But then one expected wildness from these dear Scottish hills, homely hills so glenny and good.

So despite the fresh wind the two ladies stood and surveyed their calendar imposition. A smile for each other, a knowing nod, and once more they turned to the scene and their eyes became distant—pleased, pleased that they had come and that what they expected was there, most content and kindly in the dream picture made by their eyes upon the real scene. Then, as if enough was as good as a feast, they turned to each other and sighed—and one, simply and from the generosity of her heart, said the first thing that came to her: ‘How I wish Ellen were here, she *would* have enjoyed it so.’

The other sighed, ‘Yes’; and then together they turned to the companion-way and a cup of good warming tea, eager now to discuss the interesting topic of Ellen.

* * *

But they were not the only two on deck—as they staggered along, as laughing they clutched each other and in their thick coats grabbed the companion-way, they passed in between that hard-eyed young

man and on the other side of the doorway the girl in the pale mackintosh ; and farther on stood those two girls in such high cold shorts.

The young man saw nothing of the great receding mountains, nor did he see Mallaig grown small like a doll's town under its confetti of gulls—he saw nothing but the girls. And those eyes under their short lids, bitter and ambitious, lustful, swivelled warily between the two grouped and the one sitting. Where was the better chance ? Those two with their legs bare nearly to their bottoms—they looked something. Two out together on the spree, hikers probably, they had wool caps and oilskin jackets and bloody great boots with spikes. Their legs looked funny all bare from boot to bum—still, they were legs, young legs and soft if indeed cold. Fine place to choose for a spree though, and there was your youth movements for you, giving girls outlandish ideas like coming to this iceberg ; and outlandish was the word. Still, two together was always something, two chances in one, and each would vie with the other for his attentions, they would smile the larger and give great willing looks. Till he chose one, and then the other would mope, and that was always the worst of two—it became three's no company. Still. And yet—that other in the natty mac sitting alone, she might want company on any account, and he'd be well in, nice and easy. A bit snooty ! But the snooty ones turned out often enough the best, they knew what they wanted. And there she was settled, not reading, nothing but looking out at that bloody cold sea. She looked lonely enough. Still. He knew better than to go straight up. Might get a back-hander, the old one-two. Perhaps a gentle enquiry : ' Excuse me, miss—I see you have a map there, would I be right in thinking those the Cuillins ? They aren't ? Why, it must be a pleasure to know as much as you ; it's difficult being a stranger in these parts.' And all that. Or drop his gloves at her feet ? Or simply lurch across her, as if the ship had done it—that often brought a laugh.

He put a match between his teeth and ground those small ingrowers viciously into the wood. Pretending to look at none of them he walked stiff-legged over to the rail and placed himself exactly between them. He wrinkled up his short forehead into deep horizontal furrows—those that looked casual, as though he were emptying a full mind the better to perceive new things—and gazed blindly out to sea. So he stood for minutes, and the gulls glided and swooped around. Sometimes these hung on the air at

the speed of the ship, and turned their faces inwards, curious, looking him in the eye. The bare girls in oilskins were throwing them bread-chunks from a screw of coloured comic. They laughed and their screams came down on the wind, and though they were so near those screams sounded like an echo. The gulls adroitly caught the pieces in mid-air—at which always the girls burst into fresh screams. So it was very easy for the young man first to smile amiably and then fully to burst laughing with them as one particular gull missed its piece.

But the girls acted strangely. Together, with no sign between them, motivated like twin puppets, they stared straight at him : their eyes blanked up : they were looking through him : then, as if they had never seen him, they both turned to gaze slowly out to sea. Their two faces plainly said : 'There is no one on the ship but us, but her and me.' And oh bored, bored, the young man too looked out to sea—the match snapped in his teeth, snapped at this trick he knew so well, snapped that two such oilskinned bums should prink themselves into such importance. He said softly to himself, spitting out the match : 'Sod that then.'

A minute later he turned casually the other way, taking a quick squint at the girl sitting still there alone in her white gummy mackintosh. Taking a breath he moved away from the rail, walked across to the companion-way door just by her side, seemed there to trip, to stagger, to drop his gloves and all he had and lurch all over her.

* * *

Meanwhile, that fat man in black was nowhere to be seen. But on the way from their warming cup of tea the two matrons passed very near where he was ; they glimpsed through a glass porthole into a small wooden room and saw there a mass of black, already, it seemed, asleep.

They saw his bulged black waistcoat jutted into the little wooden flap-table ; they saw the empty beer-bottles and the little wicked whisky glasses like chessmen on that board ; they saw his hands, pouched with blood, resting sideways and almost on their backs, palms upward in sleep. 'Is he ill, then ?' they thought. Then, worried by this, they agreed he must be all right—though what he came on such a trip for, just to sit inside and drink, it was difficult for their lives to think. There he sat, his red chin lurched deeply down on his black waistcoat top, his large black hat overshadowing like poet or priest. And there, after they had passed on their way

to the ladies' lounge, he continued to sit ; a figure framed by the inquisitive porthole, more of a round picture hung on the wall than a person inside who at some time, impossibly, might move.

* * *

The lean-faced little father from Glasgow remained on deck. He and all his family sat huddled in chairs behind the funnel, all nestled and rugged like wealthy emigrants. Father, tough and lean-faced beneath his checked cap, nodded a superior approbation of the air—he had blown some money on this trip, he was going to enjoy it, he was in command—and he smoked his cigarette from an arm held bent with muscle, holding it between finger and thumb and with little finger curled out in showful ease. He turned to Mother and pointed sternly with this superior hand :

—See, Ma ? Muck there, the Isle o' Muck.

Mother turned to the horizon, where she saw far away a shapeless piece of rock. She nodded, pleased and satisfied :

—Muck is it ? Well.

Father peered at her from beneath his great peak, together their eyes gravely conspired. They both nodded, satisfied. They had experienced the Isle of Muck. Muck could be crossed off, it was there still, nobody had been tricked. And instantly was forgotten—Father was back at the sports-page and Mother began at her brood :

—Alfie, stop touching, it's the Captain's. Clarie, make Alfie leave the bleedin' funnel be.

* * *

The ship churned on into the sullen sea, great bullying iron pushing into cold waters of mineral green. To starboard now was a corner of Skye, to port there came slowly harsh Eigg and thunderous Rum. But that cold-eyed young man saw nothing of those coming islands he might have come to see, he sat to starboard with his plastic girl. He had succeeded. Whether or not she knew it was a dodge scarcely mattered. If she had known, then at least it acted like an excuse. She was simply willing to speak and sit with him. And from then on there began the fearful old tragedy—innocence enchanted by vice.

His tight face unscrewed into a hung-open sham of courtesy, his forehead creased up in horizontal humble enquiry, he asked :

—Excuse me, Miss—I see you have a map there, would I be right in thinking those the Cuillins ?

GLIDING GULLS AND GOING PEOPLE

Her face brightened, she became alive not in pleasure at expressing what she knew but simply in talking to that man :

—No, not here, they're farther up. See, right up there, where we're going. But you can't see the tops, the tops are in cloud.

—Indeed? Why, it must be a real pleasure to know as much as you; it's difficult being a stranger in these parts.

—Oh, I'm not a stranger. I've lived here all my life. Over in Mallaig.

—Now that's interesting, that's interesting. Lived in these parts all your life, have you? *Have* you, now.

—Well, I *think* all my life. You see—

—What's that, *think*? *Think*?

—You see—

—Come off it, you're pulling my leg, you can't tell *me* you don't know where you've been all your life a smart girl like you. Telling me you don't know who you are next.

—That's it, I don't really.

—Uh.

—Of course I know I'm me. But who *me* is I couldn't ever be sure.

—Ho?

—I'm a changeling.

—Wassat? *Wassat*?

—They say I'm a changeling.

She stared at him waiting, her deep dark eyes moist between the collars of her plastic mac, against her halo hood of water white. In those eyes there lay a slight cast. But that young man saw no eyes, he was looking at her lips, hoping like hell nothing more like what he had heard would come. Somehow the boot had got on the wrong foot, he should have been doing the talking and now she had gummed up the works with this fancy stuff. What the hell was a changeling, anyway? He furrowed up his brow in perplexed sympathy, coughed, then remembered—it was the old doorstep dodge. He cooed :

—Orphan, eh? Poor kid, no mum nor dad. Doesn't seem to've done you a packet of harm though. Not by the look of you. Foundling, eh?

—No. Changeling.

—Ah, you mean foundling. Foundling's what you mean.

—No. *Changeling*. They say when you're a baby someone comes and changes you with another baby. I've been sort of queer all

my life. That's why mum and my sisters say I was changed. The fairies came and changed me. I'm like a fairy, see?

—Fairies? Come off it.

—I am. I really am.

—Oho!

She's nuts, he thought. A nice balls-up—fairies. He edged a bit away from her. Then a slow, rich, gluey smile stretched his mouth. His eyes stared still hard, scheming. This wasn't so bad after all! If she was nuts, she might be that much easier! You sometimes got round a soft-head easier.

He got towards her:

—I get you. That's interesting what you say, real interesting. Tell you what, you and me's going to have one. Drop of nice port wine, eh?

—Well . . .

—Come on, do you handsome a parky day like this.

—Well, I'd not say no to a cup of tea now . . .

—Cupper tea? That what fairies drink?

—Now you mustn't laugh . . .

—Whatever you say, princess. Lead the way.

Now, chuckling together, he falsely and she in real delight, they rose and staggered off against the wind to the companion-way. For one moment, before going down, they paused—she pointed to where a gull stood high and solitary on the summit of the after flag-pole. It stood with the careful genius birds have for showing up statues. Other gulls wheeled and swooped round, but that one stood stiffly still and careful. The girl tittered:

—I wonder what he's thinking up there?

He looked quickly up, then shrugged—eyes already on the companion-way and action:

—Ask me. Just ask *me*.

* * *

That man in black in the wooden bar with a grunt woke up. He looked startled, turned to the empty bench beside him and said:

—What's time? We there?

Receiving no answer he looked with suspicion round the rest of that bare wooden cabin, saw his empty whisky glasses in front and again grunted. It was a final grunt. Stretching his huge stomach more, he put both hands in pockets at the same time, drew out

GLIDING GULLS AND GOING PEOPLE

with one hand a red silk handkerchief and with the other a small black book, blew his nose and commenced to read at the same time. Once a dark shape flashed winging by the porthole. He brushed it away from his page like a fly, but never looked up. The engines throbbed with his silence.

* * *

The engines throbbed, the boat shuddered, and now that Glasgow father was up and standing by the rail with a pink-faced scrubbed old gentleman. Perhaps his silk white hair made this old man look so clean—or perhaps it was the little old lady who fitted so neatly near his arm. She wore a straggled tippet round her throat; from this her live little face came like a small round vegetable. From time to time, as the three talked, these two looked at each other with twinkling affection. The Glasgow man was saying:

—Turbines, steam turbines, that's what they are. And I'm *telling* you, I'm *telling you*—it won't be long before *you'll* be seeing Diesels along this line. Diesels you'll see.

He was looking with small fury at the old man. His checked peak thrust forward, the lines deep in his cheeks dragging his mouth down in scorn. But it was the scorn of approval; scorning all other times, astonished by this world of plenty that rained Diesels. The old man nodded:

—Times are changing. It's a turn of speed they're after.

The old lady smiled up at him:

—That's it.

The checked cap nodded emphasis. Then the old gentleman went on:

—But us'll have in mind the old paddlers, won't us, madam? Foof foof foofle foof—*that's* the stuff to give 'em.

He churned wide with his hands, turning them round like paddle-wheels. The old lady pressed her small face backwards with laughter. The man with the cap relaxed, and again in approval nodded.

—Ay, they did their turn rightly and no one's goin' to say a word agin' 'em.

Creeping up nearer on the starboard came Eigg and Rum, queer masses of rock and mountain presiding the sea, aloof and insolent as battleships. Unique shapes—Eigg low like half a huge whale of grey stone cut open and exposing its great scar of ribbed blubber: Rum lowering behind, mountainous and jagged, black against the

silver sunlight like a giant tooth extracted and roots upmost planted in the sea. People looked, and looked away consumed with their own affairs. The gulls flew round and round, pacing the ship, swooping up and down, planing no one knew how or where or why, on a voyage instinctive but unaware. Their piping over the cold green sea came and then was lost on the wind.

* * *

Those militant fanciers of cake, the navy and the nigger, had already confessed to an empty feeling in their tum-tums, and now stood at the head of a small queue forming far down in the ship outside the glass-doored dining-saloon. Inside the doors stewards stood, themselves a scattered queue, also waiting. No one moved. The clock only slowly wound the minutes forward across its marine and brass-bound face.

Since no teas were then served, the young man had thankfully been able to guide his changeling to a port and lemon. They sat in the small bar, as far away as possible from the man in black. That was not far.

The fat man, deep in Johnson's tour of the Hebrides, with these in fact passing unseen through the dark bulwarks, had no wish to speak to them. But being there he spoiled the young man's hopes of privacy, and so this one kept the steward behind the bar in conversation. Talk to impress his changeling, talk of two men together. On he talked. The steward only nodded.

—Wouldn't suit me, this job. I like to get going. How much do you pull in a week? Chicken feed. Me, I'm the best man on the road. Give me a good line and I'll sell it to anybody. Mind you it's got to be a good line, you can't sell a dud. Not even me, I can't.

He paused and looked round with wonder at himself to the steward. The steward gave him back a grim look. He went on quickly, now thumping the bar:

—Know what I do? I take night trains. So I get there early. None of your nine o'clocks. Seven, that's me. Like this I can go to my hotel and then I have a bath and then I change and then I'm there for my first call at *ten minutes past nine*. On the dot. And fresh. What's that?

Somewhere distantly in the ship a gong droned, approached and retreated and was lost. The steward sighed taciturn, seamanly relief. Looking hard at the young man he said:

—That's your dinner.

* * *

As the young man and the pleased girl rose, as the fat man, reminded, drew from his pocket, still reading, a bag of sandwiches, as those two motherly ones at the head of their queue victorious and satisfied swept through the glass door into the dining-saloon, as all over the ship others—the check-cap and his brood, the old gentleman and his new old lady, the healthy cold girls purpling in their short pants and everyone else aboard who had paid eighteen shillings for this most enjoyable round trip—as everybody turned from their places to the companion-way and the blind bowels of the dining-saloon, so Eigg and Rum came magnificently at last into full view.

And the ship, naked of sightseers, ploughed past them.

Empty decks, as empty as the great rock-mass of near Eigg, empty as the mineral cold sea, empty as the wide northern sky whistling forlorn over this part where life showed no warm profusion and few things chose to live. On the long scarred face of grey Eigg a little grass grew. The wind-dried salt emptiness of those seas was not changed since the dragon-headed longboats ran through, since that desolate day when the raiding Macleods of Skye came in their fierce craft to board the island and light at the cave-mouth a suffocating fire that smothered to death all the women, children and men of Eigg driven there to shelter. Similar winds must have driven across in those days, similarly the mountains to either side must have loomed. And the faraway white sun must have shone its pale light on similar clouds scudding like wet canvas. All around, mountains and misted horizon and metal-green sea would have lain as empty in those days as now, as when that lonely steamship, the only moving thing in view, dogged its midget course past drama into greater drama. Gigantic mountainous Rum came to port—and at last the Cuillins, topped in vertiginous cloud, towered terribly to starboard.

Yet no one saw. Even the gulls, questing open-eyed round, had swooped to the sea and were pecking the first plate emptyings thrown out in the ship's wake.

* * *

The ship turned in past shark-curing Soay and entered more sheltered water, the sea-loch Scavaig. Dinner was finished and most of the passengers had come on deck again. A sharp new wind had risen that brought sudden whirls of spray spiralling like furious little waterspouts : these, coming from nowhere, bidden it seemed

by an unseen presence, heightened the uneasy feeling of that strange precipitous place. They had entered into the first reaches of the dark Cuillins.

So that now—whether from a certain uneasiness that hung in that place, or from a sense of satiety and arrival, or from a bewildering wonder as to what should happen next—now all those different ones stood about the decks and stared at the grey rock that surrounded them. The ship's engines stopped. Then they started again : but churning backwards. One did not know quite what was happening. Yet all the time the ship slewed nearer the rock. And they had reached the end of the loch ; they drifted dangerously in the small cove-like end which was no bigger in radius than some five lengths of the ship. Could one then control a ship so unwieldy in such short space ? But the captain must know. And one saw that, though not exactly a harbour, there was some sort of a stone jetty built out from low-lying rock. Could one then land here ?

Really, in all that sharp rock ? But it was on the schedule to land.

Already a motor-launch had put off from the jetty and was spitting over the hundred yards or so to the ship. Yet how was one to get into that boat ? So low down ? There must be some difficult seamanship here—would not each passenger be involved ? That father in the checked cap thought for a terrible moment : ' Breeches Buoy ? ' And thought : ' Women and children.' And thought of his wife swinging helpless and fat out in the cradle over horrible water.

The iron sides of the ship invited sharp rock. One felt that a sound would echo for years round and round that hard place. If one shouted. Nobody shouted.

And above, as though the cold and friendless near cliffs were not menacing enough, a great dark jagged Cuillin blasphemed black against the highest sky. So they stood not knowing. And then perceptibly, having come up, there began a movement down. Soon all the passengers had sheeped on to the inside stairs and were standing queued and pressed on those steep steps inside. Brass-bound and embellished with the framed monochromes of life-belts and statistics of draught, those stairs led to where a door had been opened miraculously in the ship's very side just above the water-line. Pressed together, not knowing what was coming, but herded and willing, they waited.

Somewhere up above, from the upper deck perhaps to that

extraordinary door below, sailors were shouting to one another. There came a shuffling at the front of the queue—an oilskinned man from the launch had stepped up into the ship, he was making his way along to where a short fat bluff double-breasted officer stood. Together these two, talking closely, disappeared through a door into some most water-tight looking part. The people waited. They grew silent. There was no more to be said.

Waited and waited. The ship rolled slightly. Nobody knew quite how near those rocks they were now.

Then up above, quite suddenly, and for some reason that will never be known, one of the circling seagulls swooped into a wild ellipse and headed off. Low on the water it flew straight as a line back across the lonely miles to Mallaig.

After waiting minutes, those who formed the last half of the queue gradually dispersed. Having no valuable precedence, being far up the staircase by the deck, they thinned and straggled up for air and to see.

It had been promised in the itinerary that a landing would be made here at the end of the loch. For with a short walk inland one could really see the Cuillins, feel the Cuillins—and lying just out of sight was the inland Loch Corruisk, a still water closed in forever by frowning cliffs. This was reputed to be the most desolate and terrifying place in the British Isles. Something one should see. And now—to their surprise—those who climbed again on deck saw that in fact the launch was putting off again, empty but for one passenger, a rough-looking man in broadcloth. The ship still lay safely in the centre of that cold claustrophobic cup of water. But now there was more commotion on the stairs, the people parted and climbing up came that great figure in black. Impassively he passed, gripping his book, and his stomach carried him off the staircase and straight back to the bar. The cold-eyed young man, letting him pass, thought: 'Well, that's that.' For the whole twenty minutes he had been trying to persuade his changeling to stay behind in the empty ship. He had described in detail the trivial nature of a Loch Corruisk he had never seen. But the changeling allowed nothing to alter her mind. She liked nature. Especially in her new white mac.

But a further commotion followed the fat man up the stairs. The whole queue had turned and now were slowly remounting the stairs, grumbling with surprise, laughing with surprise, unsurprised and silent. There was to be no landing—the water was too

low from the level of the jetty. Last of all came those who had made certain to be first, the nigger and the navy caps—now for the moment undone.

—And all this way, too!

—They ought to know. Telling us and then not.

—I was never so surprised.

—What I mean is they ought to know. The captain ought, really. What I mean is it's his job. It's his job, isn't it, Cora?

—I was never so surprised.

But not for long. A few stairs higher, and it was all over. The future had to be looked to. Already the boat was moving homeward.

—There, we're moving! It won't be long now.

Already visions of home presented themselves. After the first dismay, all minds had turned to thoughts of home. Watches were consulted. Ideas of the length of the homeward trip were exchanged. The father with the checked cap, eagerly always pacing the deck and admiring the mechanical prowess of the ship, had found again that old lady and gentleman.

—We'll be ashore by four o'clock! She's making a pretty turn. Twelve knots, I'm reckoning. We've the wind behind us and all.

The old gentleman made no reply. This was unfair, such a statement called for argument. So the checked cap repeated, intruding his chin:

—Twelve knots, I said.

The old gentleman nodded.

—I expect you're right. Yes. Twelve knots.

So the other said:

—Well. Well then could you tell me the time, the time it is now, the right time?

—I'm afraid I haven't a watch.

—What about the missus?

The old man turned and smiled. His eyes twinkled. The old lady pressed her chin into her fur, blushing, though her pale cheeks showed no colour.

—She's not my missus.

He looked down twinkling at her small beaming face.

—In fact—my dear—I don't even know your name, do I?

He turned back to the checked-cap man and said slowly, emphatically and softly, as though telling a story from a long time ago:

—You see—this has been my lucky day.

So the ship went churning back past Soay and Rum and Eigg and distant Muck. The sun paled low, silvering the western waters, giving to all those islands lying Atlanticwards a romance of lost lands. Islands reaching out towards some place irrevocable, a place that only might have been, and now in a visionary moment at end of day shown somehow as a real possibility. Perhaps for the first time many of those people began to look at what was passing with moved hearts, with curious regret.

They stood about the decks in groups, or sat sheltered on the long wooden seats to leeward by the funnel. They had fallen silent and their eyes were on the sea. The homeward journey rests the soul, nothing to be done but to arrive. A shorter journey—no danger of surprise, no new climates to assail.

And in this very relaxation the senses may at last blossom. For the first time the journey is seen as it is, for the first time it is felt to be sliding away forever from grasp. Never again, nevermore. Evanescent as the water at the ship's keel, the white ephemeral wake, water that marks the passage, white and wide, that melts and vanishes in personless flat green. A journey made, no more. Soon forgotten. Thus the deep iron sides of the ship sailed on relentless homewards—leaving behind the magic of the westering sun, flying on what felt a following wind, sailing ever faster home.

Even that cold-eyed young man seemed to feel some of this melancholy beauty of a journey ending. He stood by the ship's rail half-hidden by the curved white prow of a lifeboat, his changingling tucked in his arm. He never tried to kiss her. His eyes rested, a shade softer, on the horizon and the last of those great receding island shapes. He had planned, complacently, to make no kiss until they were ashore. He had told himself that by holding off he would impress her with trust of himself—and provoke her at the same time with a wish to entice him. This decided, he could relax the better, he could give himself to the scene.

But the man in black still sat in the bar. He read on with comfort and seclusion of the doctor's journey two centuries before: within the square of his book it was warmer, more defined, too, than the great and gusty outside.

Gulls circled and swooped high round the wind-proud mast, swooped low to kiss the water—but among these too there were thoughts of home; some suddenly took off ahead of the ship and flew swiftly, arcing to where now Mallaig began to show its colour and indeed its own white smoke of gulls.

They drew in, the *Pride of the Isles* and her wool-wrapped passengers. Steam of gulls and smoke from the curing sheds greeted them. The black iron touched the hard stone quay, great ropes flung out to the bollards and winches, small dock machines began to grind, the first burnt smell of kippering blew over all. So stationary things looked! Here the hotels and the houses and the long-legged sheds had stood all that while waiting, not moving up and down but settled and dry and, most of all, stationary. Suddenly it came over many how dull all these things were. Homely and welcoming—but dull, dull, dull.

Yet as soon as they had set foot on the quay this feeling vanished. The solidity of the land claimed them, here it was safe and sound, one could relax here as—with on the calmest seas always some gentle motion—one can never relax on a boat.

First ashore were those two matrons. Only pausing to rebutton once more their coats, to set homewards their scarves and the peaks of those two hat-caps, they set off at once along the quay. Their direction had been planned long before.

—It was a lovely, lovely day.

—It was worth every shilling we paid. But I shall be glad to be home.

—A nice sit-down, Cora. A nice cup of tea.

Soon after the mother and her brood came stumbling down the gangway, clotted together like one large animal disturbed in the unloading process. Behind, with the nonchalance of a drover, came the father. He kept a wary eye on the mechanism of landing—on hawsers, bollards, gangway and all practical arrangements. That eye never questioned 'why' a thing was—but always 'how is it done?' Then he too took a last look up at the ship and was gone.

The man in black, staggering a little from weight or alcohol, hurried at speed down the gangway, carried as always by his own great momentum. He took no last backward glance. He carried it in his hand, in the little black book.

The old gentleman and the lady were among the last to leave, they had lingered as long as possible. Now they too came slowly, unsurely, down that difficult slope. At the bottom the old gentleman turned, and with courtesy handed his new lady off. His eyes were watering in the cold, his shoulders bent, he breathed harder from even this slight effort: together they turned and passed along the quay.

Suddenly the changeling, who still stood at the deck-rail, started

to wave. The young man by her side started. He had been waiting casually, feeling he had so much time, pleasurably possessive. But now that plastic white arm was pumping up and down, that face was smiling excited! She was looking somewhere down along the quay. He said quickly, eyes hard, lips thin:

—Hello, what's this? What's up?

—It's him! I thought he'd never come!

—Him? Oo?

—My boy.

—Wassat you said?

—My boy that I'm engaged with.

—Christ!

—I beg your pardon.

—Nothing, oh, nothing. Oh, nuts. So long.

—But I wanted you to meet . . .

He was already at the gangway, dancing down with long stiff strides, his mackintosh belted tight and hard round him.

Those two girls with the high shorts had their oilcloth capes on, and these capes, reaching just to the bottom of the shorts at the tops of their blue legs, gave them a look of naked pixies. Together they stopped by the door of a kippering hut. Inside, the little dark kippers hung above a fire of cinders spread over the floor. Each kipper looked like a small ebony god in a temple full of incense braziers. The girls giggled; then turned away. The young man eyed them, considering. But they simply turned, hands in pockets, and with heads bent trudged off down the quay. Heads bent, two together walking intent only on themselves, talking, walled-in and unassailable as young and pretty girls can surely be.

Soon, when the sun set, the gulls themselves stopped circling. The white-streaked quays grew quiet. The gliding gulls had gone to roost, the people going . . . gone.

Byron: Unpublished Letters

ALL the different aspects of Byron's nature appear in rapid succession, sometimes brightly, sometimes flickeringly, throughout the pages of his correspondence. But his letters do not deserve notice merely because they build up into the portrait of an extraordinarily gifted and unusually complex personality. They are also memorable because this intimate record of his moods and thoughts and doings is conveyed in a prose-style at once sensitive and vigorous, a style that is frequently slipshod but now and then rises to the height of imaginative literature. The letters of Pope, Gray and Walpole are deliberate works of art, copied out and carefully revised and often begged back from the recipient for further literary polishing. Byron, however, agreed with Dorothy Osborne that the real charm of a letter was its freedom from any deliberate literary artifice; 'all letters (she had remarked) . . . should be free and easy as one's discourse, not studied as an oration, nor made up of hard words like a charm.' Byron's epistles have always this quality: at their best, they are admirable *talk*—delivered by a talker of genius, who had explored life energetically and mused upon it passionately, even though (as his detractors may suggest) he had not seen it steadily.

Of the eleven letters printed below, ten are published for the first time, while the remaining letter, that written to John Cam Hobhouse from Patras on July 29th, 1810, contains long unpublished passages. The opening letter, written some six years earlier, shows Byron as a schoolboy, already at odds with the world and fiercely determined to carve a path to greatness:

TO HIS MOTHER

[*Harrow-on-the-Hill, 1804?*]

MY DEAR MOTHER,—I received your letter and was very glad to hear that you are well. I am very comfortable here as far as relates to my Comrades, but I have got into two or three scrapes with Drury and the other Masters, which are not very convenient. The other day as he was reprimanding me (perhaps very properly) for my misdeeds he uttered the follow-

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ing words, 'it is not probable that from your age and situation in the School your Friends will permit you to remain longer than Summer. But because you are about to leave Harrow, it is no reason you are to make the house a scene of riot and confusion.' This and much more said the Doctor ; and I am informed from creditable authority that Dr. Drury, Mr. Evans and Martin Drury said I was a *Blackguard*. That Martin Drury said so I *know*, but I am inclined to doubt the authenticity of the report as to the rest. Perhaps it is true, perhaps not. But thank God they may call me a Blackguard, but they can never make me one. If Dr. Drury can bring one boy or any one else to say that I have committed a dishonourable action, and to prove it, I am content. But otherwise I am stigmatized without a cause, and I disdain and despise the malicious efforts of him and his Brother. His Brother Martin not Henry Drury (whom I will do the justice to say has never since last year interfered with me) is continually reproaching me with the narrowness of my fortune, to what end I know not ; his intentions may be good, but his manner is disagreeable. I see no reason why I am to be reproached with it. I have as much money, as many clothes, and in every respect of appearance am equal if not superior to most of my school-fellows, and if my fortune is narrow it is my misfortune, not my fault. But, however, the way to riches, to greatness lies before me. I can, I will cut myself a path through the world or perish in the attempt. Others have begun life with nothing and ended greatly. And shall I, who have a competent if not a large fortune, remain idle ? No, I will carve myself the passage to Grandeur, but never with Dishonour. These, Madam, are my intentions. But why this upstart Son of a Button maker is to reproach me about an estate which, however, is far superior to his own, I know not. But that he should call me a Blackguard is far worse. On account of the former, I can blame only Mr. Hanson (and that officious friend Lord Grey de Ruthyn, whom I shall ever consider as my most inveterate enemy). It is a mere trifle, but the latter I cannot bear. I have not deserved it, and I will not be insulted with impunity. Mr. Martin Drury rides out with his son, sees me at a distance on a poney which I hired to go

BYRON

to the bathing place which is too far for me to walk. He calls out, tells his son I am a Blackguard. This son, who is no friend of mine, comes home, relates the story to his companions, possibly with a few exaggerations. But however the greatest part was true, and I am to be considered as such a person by my comrades. It shall not be. I will say no more. I only hope you will take this into your consideration and remove me at Summer from a place where I am goaded with insults by those from whom I have little deserved it.

I remain your affectionate Son, BYRON

The following report to his devoted but slightly censorious friend John Cam Hobhouse, from whom he had parted a few days earlier, Hobhouse returning to England while he himself remained in Greece, reflects the gaiety and irresponsibility of Byron's Eastern wander-years :

TO JOHN CAM HOBHOUSE

Patras, July 29th, 1810

DEAR HOBHOUSE,—The same day which saw me ashore at Zea, set me forth once more upon the high seas, where I had the pleasure of seeing the frigate in the *Doldrums* by the light of sun and moon. Before daybreak I got into the Attics at Thaskalio, hence I dispatched men to Keratia for horses, and in ten hours from landing I was at Athens. There I was greeted by my Lord Sligo, and next day Messrs. North, Knight, and Fazakerly paid me formal visits. Sligo has a brig with 50 men who won't work, 12 guns that refuse to go off, and sails that have cut every wind except a contrary one, and then they are as willing as may be. He is sick of the concern, but an engagement of six months prevents him from parting with this precious ark. He *would* travel with me to Corinth, though as you may suppose I was already heartily disgusted with travelling in company. He has 'en suite' a painter, a captain, a gentleman misinterpreter (who boxes with the painter), besides sundry idle English varlets. We were obliged to have twenty-nine horses in all. The captain and the *Drogueman* were left at Athens to kill bullocks for the crew, and the Marquis and the limner, with a ragged Turk by way of Tartar, and the ship's carpenter in the capacity of linguist, with two servants (one of whom had the gripes) clothed both in leather

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breeches (the thermometer 125° !!), followed over the hills and far away. On our route, the poor limner in these gentle latitudes was ever and anon condemned to bask for half-an-hour, that he might produce what he himself termed a 'bellissimo sketche' (pardon the orthography of the last word) of the surrounding country. You may also suppose that a man of the Marchese's kidney was not very easy in his seat. As for the *servants*, they and their *leather breeches* were equally immovable at the end of the first stage. Fletcher, too, with his usual acuteness, contrived at Megara to ram his damned clumsy foot into a boiling tea-kettle. At Corinth we separated, the M[arquis] for Tripolitza, I for Patras. Thus far the ridiculous part of my narrative belongs to others, now comes my turn. At Vortitza I found my dearly-beloved Eustathius, ready to follow me not only to England, but to Terra Incognita, if so be my compass pointed that way. This was *four* days ago : at present affairs are a little changed. The next morning I found the dear soul upon horseback clothed very sparsely in Greek Garments, with those ambrosial curls hanging down his amiable back, and to my utter astonishment, and the great abomination of Fletcher, a *parasol* in his hand to save his complexion from the heat. However, in spite of the *Parasol* on we travelled very much enamoured, as it should seem, till we got to Patras, where Strané received us into his new house where I now scribble. Next day he went to visit some accursed cousin and the day after we had a grand quarrel. Strané said I spoilt him. I said nothing ; the child was as froward as an unbroken colt, and Strané's Janizary said I must not be surprised, for he was too *true* a *Greek* not to be disagreeable. I think I never in my life took so much pains to please any one, or succeeded so ill. I particularly avoided every thing which *could possibly give the least offence in any manner*. Somebody says, that those who try to please will please. This I know not ; but I am sure that no one likes to fail in the attempt. At present he goes back to his father, though he is now become more tractable. Our *parting* was vastly pathetic, as many kisses as would have sufficed for a boarding school, and embraces enough to have ruined the character of a county in England, besides tears (not on my

part) and expressions of 'Tenerrezza' to a vast amount. All this and the warmth of the weather has quite overcome me. Tomorrow I will continue. At present, 'to bed,' 'to bed,' 'to bed.' The youth insists on seeing me tomorrow, the issue of which interview you shall hear. I wish you a pleasant sleep.

July 30th, 1810

I hope you have slept well. I have only dozed. For this last six days I have slept little and eaten less. The heat has burnt me brown, and as for Fletcher, he is a walking Cinder. My new Greek acquaintance has called thrice, and we improve vastly. In good truth, so it ought to do, for I have quite exhausted my poor powers of pleasing, which God knows are little enough, Lord help me! We are to go on to Tripolitza and Athens together. I do not know what has put him into such good humour unless it is some Sal Volatile I administered for his headache, and a green shade instead of that effeminate parasol. But so it is. We have *redintegrated* (a new word for you) our affections at a great rate. Now is not all this very ridiculous? Pray tell Matthews. It would do his heart good to see me travelling with my Tartar, Albanians, Buffo, Fletcher and his amiable παιδί prancing by my side. Strané hath got a steed which I have bought, full of spirit, I assure you, and very handsome accoutrements. My *account* with him was as I stated on board the Salsette. Here hath just arrived the Chirurgeon of the Spider from Zante, who will take this letter to Malta. I hope it will find you warm. You cannot conceive what a delightful companion you are now you are gone. Sligo has told me some things that ought to set you and me by the ears, but they shan't; and as a proof of it, I won't tell you what they are till we meet, but in the meantime I exhort you to behave well in polite society. His Lordship has been very kind, and as I crossed the Isthmus of Corinth, offered if I chose to take me to that of Darien, but I liked it not, for you have cured me of 'villainous company.'

I am about—after a Giro of the Morea—to move to Athens again, and thence I knew not where; perhaps to Englonde, Malta, Sicily, Ægypt, or the Low Countries. I suppose you are at Malta or Palermo. I amuse myself alone very much

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to my satisfaction, riding, bathing, sweating, hearing Mr. Paul's musical clock, looking at his red breeches ; we visit him every evening. There he is, playing at stopper with the old Cogia Cachi. When these amusements fail, there is my Greek to quarrel with, and a sophia to tumble upon. Nourse and Dacres had been at Athens scribbling all sorts of ribaldry over my old apartment, where Sligo, before my arrival, had added to your B.A. an A.S.S., and scrawled the compliments of Jackson, Deville, Miss Cameron, and ' *I am very unhappy Sam Jennings.*' Wallace is incarcerated, and wanted Sligo to bail him, at the ' Bell and Savage,' Fleet Rules. The news are not surprising. What think you ? Write to me from Malta, the Mediterranean, or Ingleterra, to care of *ὁ μονόλοος Στράνε*.

Have you cleansed my pistols ? and dined with the ' *Gineral* ' ? My compliments to the church of St. John's, and peace to the ashes of Ball. How is the Skipper ? I have drank his cherry-brandy, and his rum has floated over half the Morea. Plaudite et valete.

Yours ever, BYRON

We next encounter him as a fashionable poet and *homme à bonnes fortunes*, much troubled by the importunities of the crack-brained Lady Caroline Lamb, who had wheedled his portrait out of John Murray by forging Byron's handwriting (see illustration) :

TO LADY CAROLINE LAMB

January [?], 1813

[This letter was found enclosed in a letter to Lady Melbourne of Jan. 10th, 1813.]

You should answer the note for the writer seems unhappy. And when we are so a slight is doubly felt.

I shall go at 12 ; but you must send me a ticket, which I shall religiously pay for. I shall not call because I do not see that we are at all improved by it. Why did you send your boy ? I was out, and am always so occupied in a morning that I could not have seen him as I wished had I been at home. I have seen Moore's wife, who is beautiful, with the darkest eyes. They have left town. M. is in great distress about us, and indeed people talk as if there were no other pair of absurdities in London. It is hard to bear all this without cause, but worse to give cause for it. Our folly has had the

Once more my Dearest Friend
let me assure you that
I had no hand in the letter
you mention as do not take
account about nothing but call
where I desired - as to his
exposing you the Picture - it
is quite ridiculous - only name
me as if you like it then
but this note & that will
suffice - you know my reasons

for wishing them not to allow

all who call the same latitude

explain what ever you think

necessary to them or take

what Picture you think

most like but do not forget

to return it the soonest you

can - for reasons I explained.

My Journal I will take care

of that ~~part of the~~ ~~Journal~~ ~~to~~ ~~be~~ ~~the~~ ~~only~~

~~which I have written~~ ~~to~~ ~~be~~ ~~the~~ ~~only~~ ~~one~~ ~~which~~ ~~I~~ ~~have~~ ~~written~~

Upon ~~the~~ ~~Journal~~ ~~to~~ ~~be~~ ~~the~~ ~~only~~ ~~one~~

Bygone

After Ellen was found in
my name by Caroline L.
for the purpose of obtaining
a picture from the back of

Ms. M. - January 1819
Bygone

effect of a fault. I conformed and could conform, if you would lend your aid, but I can't bear to see you look unhappy, and am always on the watch to observe if you are trying to make me so. We must make an effort. This dream, this delirium of two months must pass away. We in fact do not know one another. A month's absence would make us rational. You do not think so. I know it. We have both had 1000 previous fancies of the same kind, and shall get the better of this and be ashamed of it according to the maxim of Rochefoucault. But it is better that I should leave town than you, and I will make a turn [?], or go to Cambridge or Edinburgh. Now don't abuse me, or think me altered. It is because I am not, cannot alter, that I shall do this, and cease to make fools talk, friends grieve, and the wise pity.

Ever most affectionately and truly Yrs, B.

TO JOHN CAM HOBHOUSE

January 17th, 1813

DEAR H.,—I am on my way to town, writing from my sordid Inn. Many thanks for your successful diplomacy with *Ma-Mee*. And now 'Grant him one favour and he'll ask you two'—I have written to Batt for rooms. Would it hurt your dignity to order me some at any other hotel (by a note) in case he should not have them?—for I have no opportunity of receiving your or his answer before I reach London, and if he has not any to spare and I arrive late I shall be as bewildered as Whittington.

I rejoice in your good understanding with Murray. Through him you will become a '*staple author*.' D. is a *damned* nincom. assuredly. He has bored me into getting young Fox to recommend his further *damnation* to the Manager Whitbread. God (and the Gods) knows and know what will become of his '25 acts and some odd scenes.'

I am at Ledbury. Ly. O. and famille I left at Hereford, as I hate travelling with Children unless they have gotten a Stranguary. However I wait here for her tomorrow like a dutiful Cortejo. O[xford] has been in town these ten days. Car. L. has been *forging letters* in my name and hath thereby pilfered the best picture of *me*, the Newstead Miniature!!! Murray was the imposed upon. The Devil, and Medea, and

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her Dragons to boot, are possessed of that little maniac. Bankes is gone or going to tourify. I gave him a few letters.

I expect and hope you will have a marvellous run and I trust you have not forgotten 'monogamy my dr. boy.' If the 'learned world are not in arms against your paradoxes' I shall despise these coster-monger days when Merit availeth not.

Excuse my buffoonery, for I write under the influence of a solitary nipportin [?] of Grog, such as the Salsette afforded 'us youth' in the Arches [?]

Ever yrs. dr. H., B.

Byron suffered not only from Lady Caroline Lamb, but from many unknown devotees, among whom was a Swiss girl named Henrietta d'Ussières. She finally visited him at his lodgings, with somewhat alarming and disappointing consequences :

TO HENRIETTA D'USSIÈRES

June 8th, 1814

Excepting your compliments (which are only excusable because you don't know me) you write like a clever woman, for which reason I hope you *look* as *unlike* one as possible. I never knew but one of your country—M^e de Stael—and she is frightful as a precipice. As it seems impracticable my visiting you, cannot you contrive to visit me? telling me the time previously that I may be in y^e way—and if this same interview leads to the 'leap into the Serpentine' you mention, we can take the jump together, and shall be very good company, for I swim like a Duck (one of the few things I can do well) and you say that your Sire taught you the same useful acquirement. I like your education of all things. It in some degree resembles my own, for the first ten years of my life were passed much amongst mountains, and I had also a tender and peremptory parent who indulged me sometimes with holidays and now and then with a box on the ear. If you will become acquainted with me, I will promise not to make love to you unless you like it—and even if I did there is no occasion for you to receive more of it than you please. You must, however, do me two favours—the first is not to mistake me for S., who is an excellent man, but to whom I have not the honour to bear the smallest (I won't say *slightest*, for he has the circumference of an Alderman) resemblance; and the next is to recollect that as 'no

BYRON

man is a hero to his Valet ' so I am a hero to no person whatsoever, and not treat me with such outrageous respect and awe, which makes me feel as if I was in a strait waistcoat. You shall be a *heroine*, however, if you prefer it and I will be and am y^r very humble Serv^t

B.

P.S.—' Surprized ' oh ! no !—I am surprized at nothing, except at your taking so much trouble about one who is not worth it. . . .

You say—what would ' my servants think ' ? 1^{stly} they seldom think at all. 2^{ndly} they are generally out of the way—particularly when most wanted. 3^{rdly} I do not know you—and I humbly imagine that they are no wiser than their Master.

Byron's sympathetic and appreciative letter to an unhappy fellow poet dates from the period when he served on the Committee of Drury Lane Theatre :

TO S. T. COLERIDGE

13 Terrace, Piccadilly, October 18th, 1815

DEAR SIR,—Your letter I have just received. I will willingly do whatever you direct about the volumes in question—the sooner the better : it shall not be for want of endeavour on my part, as a negotiator with the ' Trade ' (to talk technically) that you are not enabled to do yourself justice. Last spring I saw Wr. Scott. He repeated to me a considerable portion of an unpublished poem of yours—the wildest and finest I ever heard in that kind of composition. The title he did not mention, but I think the heroine's name was Geraldine. At all events, the ' toothless mastiff bitch ' and the ' witch Lady,' the description of the hall, the lamp suspended from the image, and more particularly of the girl herself as she went forth in the evening—all took a hold on my imagination which I never shall wish to shake off. I mention this, not for the sake of boring you with compliments, but as a prelude to the hope that this poem is or is to be in the volumes you are now about to publish. I do not know that even ' Love ' or the ' Antient Mariner ' are so impressive—and to me there are few things in our tongue beyond these two productions.

Wr. Scott is a staunch and sturdy admirer of yours, and

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with a just appreciation of your capacity deplored to me the want of inclination and exertion which prevented you from giving full scope to your mind. I will answer your question as to the 'Beggar's Bush' tomorrow or next day. I shall see Rae and Dibdin (the acting Mrs.) tonight for that purpose.

Oh—your tragedy—I do not wish to hurry you, but I am indeed very anxious to have it under consideration. It is a field in which there are none living to contend against you and in which I should take a pride and pleasure in seeing you compared with the dead. I say this *not* disinterestedly, but as a *Committeeman*. We have nothing even tolerable, except a tragedy of Sotheby's, which shall not interfere with yours when ready. You can have no idea what trash there is in the four hundred *fallow* dramas now lying on the shelves of D[rury] L[ane]. I never thought so highly of good writers as lately, since I have had an opportunity of comparing them with the bad.

Ever yours truly,

BYRON

At Lady Jersey's disastrous party, during the scandal caused by his separation from Lady Byron, when, as he approached, 'Countesses and ladies of fashion' were observed to leave the room 'in crowds,' Miss Mercer Elphinstone, 'a little red-haired bright-eyed coquette' and a great heiress in her own right, was one of the very few women brave enough to speak to him. Byron expressed his gratitude by the present of a book :

TO MISS MERCER ELPHINSTONE

April 11, 1816

DEAR MISS MERCER,—I thank you truly for yr kind acceptance of my memorial—more particularly as I felt a little apprehension that I was taking a liberty of which you might disapprove. A more useless friend you could not have, but still a very sincere and by no means a new one—altho' from circumstances you never knew (nor would it have pleased you to know) how much. These having long ceased to exist, I breathe more freely on this point, because *now* no motive can be attributed to me with regard to you of a selfish nature—at least I hope not.

I know not why I venture to talk thus, unless it be that the

BYRON

time is come when, whatever I may say, cannot be of importance enough to give offence ; and that neither my vanity *nor my wishes* ever induced me at any time to suppose that I could by any chance have become more to you than I now am.

This may account to you for that which—however little worth accounting for—must otherwise appear inexplicable in our former acquaintance. I mean those ‘intermittents’ at which you used to laugh, as I did too, although they caused me a serious reflection.

But this is foolish, perhaps improper, yet it is (or rather was) the truth, and has been a silent one while it could have been supposed to proceed from hope or presumption. I am now as far removed from both by irrevocable circumstances as I always was by my own opinion and by yours, and soon shall be still further, if further be possible, by distance.

I cannot conclude without wishing you a much happier destiny not than *mine is*, for that is nothing, but than mine ever could have been, with a little common sense and prudence on my own part—no one else has been to blame. It may seem superfluous to wish *you* all this, and it would be so if our happiness always depended on ourselves ; but it does not—a truth which I fear I have taught rather than learned, however unintentionally.

Ever most truly yrs, BYRON.

P.S.—This letter was intended as an answer to your note, which however required none. Will you excuse it for the sake of the paper on which it is written ? It is part of the spoils of Malmaison and the Imperial bureau (as it was told me) and for this reason, you will perhaps have the kindness to accept the few sheets of it which accompany this. Their stamp is the Eagle. Adieu.

From Venice, where he had found a congenial refuge in the winter of 1816, Byron wrote many letters to his friends Kinnaid and Hobhouse. The references in the first paragraph are to Kinnaid’s part in the Westminster election and to the Tory candidate, Sir Murray Maxwell, R.N. Wildman was the school-friend who had purchased Newstead Abbey : ‘Spooney,’ his nickname for his man of business, Hanson :

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TO THE HON. DOUGLAS KINNAIRD

Venice, July 15th, 1818

DEAR DOUGLAS,—I hear wonders of your popular eloquence and speeches to the mobility, from all quarters, and I see by the papers that Captain Lemchen has been well nigh slain by a *potatoe*, so the Italian Gazettes have it ; it serves him right, a fellow who has lost three ships, an Orang-outang, a Boa Constrictor (they both died in the passage), and an Election—he be damned. How came Burdett not to be at the head of the poll ?

Murray's letters and the credits are come, laud we the Gods ! If I did not know of old, Wildman to be a Man of honour, and Spooney a damned tortoise in all his proceeds, I should suspect foul play in this delay of the man and papers ; now that your politics are a little subsided, for God his sake, row the man of law, spur him, kick him on the Crickle, do something, any thing, you are my power of Attorney, and I thereby empower you to use it and abuse Hanson, till the fellow says or does something as a gentleman should do.

I am [staying] in Venice, instead of summering it at Este, writing for the Clerk and the conveyances, but, 'why tarry the wheels of his Chariot ?'

I hear of Scrope and his jests, and Hobhouse and his toils ; I wish you all the pleasure such pursuits can afford, and as much success as usually attends them.

I have lately had a long swim (beating an Italian all to bubbles) of more than four miles, from Lido to the other end of the Grand Canal, that is the part which enters from Mestri. I won by a good three quarters of a mile, and as many quarters of an hour, knocking the Chevalier up, and coming in myself quite fresh ; the fellow had swum the Beresina in the Bonaparte Campaign, and thought of coping with 'our Youth,' but it would not do.

Give my love to Scrope and the rest of us ragmuffins, and believe me yours ever and truly,

BYRON

Pray look very sharp after Spooney ; I have my suspicions, my suspicions, Sir, my Suspicions.

In this letter to Douglas Kinnaird's brother Byron gives a characteristic and extremely unromantic account of his liaison with the Countess Guiccioli, 'a young Italian, married to a rich old patrician.' It is in curious contrast to the letters from Byron which Teresa Guiccioli herself received, and which have recently appeared in Iris Origo's study of their love-affair, *The Last Attachment*.

TO THE LORD KINNAIRD

Ravenna, July 5th, 1819

MY DEAR KINNAIRD,—The G[uiccioli] has been very unwell (not ill enough though to induce any amatory abstinence, except that single day when the *Chat* awoke a little prematurely) and I persuaded *him* to have Aglietti from Venice. He came yesterday ; they have put on leeches, and prescribed a regimen, and say that she may be cured if she likes. Will she like ? I doubt her liking anything for very long, except one thing, and I presume she will soon arrive at varying even that, in which case I should be at liberty to repass the Po, and perhaps the Alps ; but as yet I can say nothing.

I had a letter from W. Webster the other day ; he is at Nantes Loire Nif, and I have half a mind to go back in search of *La Fanchette*, but I know nothing of the geography of the place. Where the devil is Nantes ? And what is Loire *Nif* ? A river, I suppose, an't it ?

La Geltruda is gone to Bologna, after pinching her left thigh one evening. I was never permitted to set eyes on her *not no more*. It is no fault of mine, her not coming to Faenza ; she did not set off till yesterday.

I have been exchanging visits with the Cardinal Legate who called on me today. He is a fine old fellow, Malvasia by name, and has been rather loose in his youth, without being much tighter in his age. He and I took very kindly to each other.

How am I to get the books, and to leave yours ? Is the Bianchi to be visible, or my *Aunt* only ? Of course, you could not doubt the lady and still less your friend ; but I suppose, nevertheless, I shall see my aunt only. Well, it is hard, but I agree, only adding that my green carriage has lost much of its splendour and consequently I am shorn of one of the principal seductive qualities of an accomplished gentleman. I am, as I said, in perfect indecision, depending upon the *will* of a woman

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who has none, and on whom I never calculate for more than twelve hours. She will do as she pleases, and then so will I. A young Italian, married to a rich old Patrician, with only one man besides for a lover, is not likely to embarrass either with a long Constancy ; and in that case, you know, there could be no great harm in my beginning the world again, or giving it up for good.

Will you tell me where this *Nantes* is? I can't find it in the road book.

Addio. I am just going to take a canter into the pine forest with Ferdinando.

Yours ever and truly, B.

P.S.—I approve your intentions about the book and the *Sequins* also.

To his half-sister Augusta Leigh he sent a similar description of his latest amatory entanglement. The sketch of Teresa Guiccioli on horseback is in the writer's finest comic vein. As Byron once plaintively remarked, though the world preferred to see him as a gloomy Childe Harold, no one liked to laugh more :

TO THE HON. AUGUSTA LEIGH *Ravenna July 26th, 1819*

MY DEAREST AUGUSTA,—I am at too great a distance to scold you, but I *will* ask you whether *your* letter of the 1st July is an *answer* to the letter I wrote you before I quitted Venice? What? is it come to *this*? Have you no memory? or no heart? You *had* both—and I *have* both—at least for *you*.

I write this presuming that you received *that* letter. Is it that you fear? Do not be afraid of the past ; the world has its own affairs without thinking of *ours* and you may write safely. If you do, address as usual to *Venice*. My house is not in St. Marc's but on the Grand Canal, within sight of the Rialto Bridge.

I do not like at all this pain in your side and always think of your mother's constitution. You must always be to me the first consideration in the world. Shall I come to *you*? or would a warm climate do you good? If so say the word, and I will provide you and your whole family (including that precious luggage your husband) with the means of making

an agreeable journey. You need not fear about *me*. I am much altered and should be little trouble to you, nor would I give you more of my company than you like. I confess after three and a half—and *such years!* and *such a year* as preceded those three years!—it would be a relief to me to see you again, and if it would be so to you I will come to you. Pray answer me, and recollect that I will do as you like in everything, even to returning to England, which is not the pleasantest of residences were *you* out of it.

I write from Ravenna. I came here on account of a Countess Guiccioli, a girl of twenty married to a very rich old man of sixty about a year ago. With her last winter I had a *liaison* according to the good old Italian custom. She miscarried in May and sent for me here, and here I have been these two months. She is pretty, a great coquette, extremely vain, excessively affected, clever enough, without the smallest principle, with a good deal of imagination and some passion. She had set her heart on carrying me off from Venice out of vanity, and succeeded, and having made herself the subject of general conversation has greatly contributed to her recovery. Her husband is one of the richest nobles of Ravenna, three-score years of age. This is his third wife. You may suppose what *esteem* I entertain for *her*. Perhaps it is about equal on both sides. I have my saddle-horses here and there is good riding in the forest. With these, and my carriage which is here also, and the sea, and my books, and the lady, the time passes. I am very fond of riding and always *was out* of England. But I hate your Hyde Park, and your turnpike roads, and must have forests, downs, or deserts to expatiate in. I detest *knowing* the road one is to go, and being interrupted by your damned finger-posts, or a blackguard roaring for twopence at a turnpike.

I send you a sonnet which this faithful lady had made for the nuptials of one of her relations in which she swears the most *alarming constancy* to her husband. Is not this good? You may suppose my *face* when she shewed it to me. I could not help laughing—one of *our* laughs. All this is very absurd, but you see that I have good morals at bottom.

She is an equestrian too, but a bore in her rides, for she can't guide her horse and he runs after mine, and tries to

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bite him, and then she begins screaming in a high hat and sky-blue riding habit, making a most absurd figure, and embarrassing me and both our grooms, who have the devil's own work to keep her from tumbling, or having her clothes torn off by the trees and thickets of the pine forest. I fell a little in love with her intimate friend, a certain Geltruda (that is *Gertrude*) who is very young and seems very well disposed to be perfidious ; but alas ! *her* husband is jealous, and the G. also detected me in an illicit squeezing of hands, the consequence of which was that the friend was whisked off to Bologna for a few days, and since her return I have never been able to see her but twice, with a dragon of a mother in law and a barbarian husband by her side, besides my own dear precious *Amica*, who hates all flirting but her own. But I have a priest who befriends me and the Gertrude says a good deal with her great black eyes, so that perhaps . . . but alas ! I mean to give up these things altogether. I have now given you some account of my present state. The guide-book will tell you about Ravenna. I can't tell how long or short may be my stay. Write to me—love me—as ever

Yours most affectly B.

P.S.—*This* affair is *not* in the least expensive, being all in the wealthy line, but troublesome, for the lady is imperious, and exigeante. However there are hopes that we may quarrel. When we do you shall hear.

With Alexander Scott and the Cavaliere Mongaldo, Byron (as already described in his letter of July 15th) set out in 1818 to swim from the Lido to Venice. The Cavaliere was outdistanced and gave up the contest :

TO ALEXANDER SCOTT

Ravenna, July 31st, 1819

DEAR SCOTTIN,—You were right. I *will* consider first. But the truth is I *do* like terra firma a little after the long absence from it. As to the G[uiccioli] she has not much to do with my resolution, as I have something besides her on my hands—and in my eye. But I shall say nothing more now, till I am more sure. There are better things in that line, in this part of the world, than at Venice. Besides, like the preserve of a manor, this part has not yet been shot over.

It would be very unpleasant to me that you should quit Venice without our meeting again. I would almost take a flight there again on purpose to see you rather than this should be, and arrange my concerns in person. Where do you think of going? How are the cows? You are wrong about H's letter. There was nothing in it to offend *her*—but me. For instance telling her that *she* would be the *planter*. That *she* was voluble—what is all this? If I had told her that she was called and thought an absurd woman (which I carefully avoided) there indeed I should have been thoroughly Hoppnerian. You may tell a man that he is thought libertine, profligate, a villain, but not that his nose wants blowing or that his neckcloth is ill tied. Suppose you were to say to that Coxcomb Mongaldo that he was dangerous, disaffected, a severe disciplinarian in his regiment, that he had ill used Carlotta Aglietti, that he had been guilty of atrocities in his retreat from *Moscow* (*Moscow* would sweeten him) he would affect but feel nothing. But if you told him that his father sold eggs not very fresh he would be wrath to a degree.

I do not know whether I make myself understood; but it is in the little nooks of character where your true tormentors play the mosquito and the gadfly, and where such fellows as M. and H. distil their little drop of venom. Now I do maintain that I have always avoided this, which is never necessary unless in cases where your fame or fortunes may be seriously attacked. I could have driven Hoppner mad had I ever told him a 10,000th part of the things that I knew and the buffone Cavaliere little less so. But I resisted the pettiness of repaying them in kind. In future I shall be less kind to them and you may tell Mongaldo so—a little tittle tattle boasting parvenu, who never could forgive one's beating him in his own narrow field as we did hollow besides in the wider one of waters. I wish you had heard the account he had left at Ferrara of the swimming match. *You* were sunk and omitted altogether, and *he* had passed the Rialto and was only beaten by me by some accident! We knew him to be a liar before but would think the complete drubbing we both gave him in the swimming match would have silenced him on that score. I could not help saying, on hearing it, to his friends, 'this story is Mongaldo all over.'

I enclose a letter which I beg you to forward to Siri and

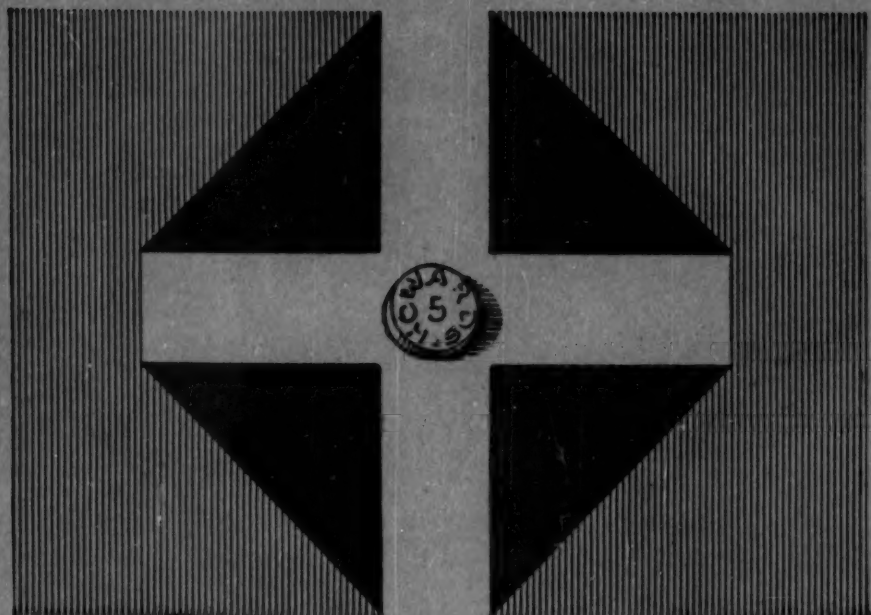
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W——. I wish them to remit the 23 francs to Genoa as I know not how.

I have as yet decided nothing, but have a general idea to quit Venice altogether, particularly if I can get this other girl. But in the meantime the establishment may remain as it is, except that I wish they enquire on what terms the landlords of the houses would take them back again supposing me to be so disposed. Edgcombe may have hint of my thoughts and Mr. Dornville also. As to the 'baron fottuto,' as he is not the only thing 'fottuto' (by me) in his family, I overlook that for his wife's sake. What *can* he do unless I buy or sell with him?—And I don't mean to do either. * If *she* plants—let her. 'There are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it.' There is a Scotch proverb for you hot as haggis. By the way how many *l*'s are there in 'fottuto'—one or two? 'Fotuto'—eh? Continue to write. Remember me to Missiaglia and *Peppi*, and Marina, and all the Conversazioners. I regret to have missed Canova at Venice, having missed him also at Rome, and in London. Believe me ever and truly yours affectly

BYRON.

[*These letters are taken from a forthcoming selection of Byron's prose-writings, published and unpublished, Byron: A Self-Portrait, where acknowledgments are recorded.*]



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